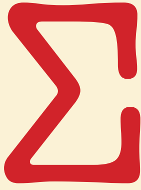

4:2 2018

Kin(g)ship and Power

Edited by Eric Nicholson

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Eric Nicholson*

Introduction

Monarchies not only excel in ordinary, everyday matters,
but they have also acquired every advantage in war.
Monarchies are better able than other governments to prepare
their forces, to use these to make the first move unobserved,
to persuade some and force or bribe others, and to induce
yet others by other means. (Isocrates 2000: 174)

Even supposing the principle to be maintained that kingly power
is the best thing for states, how about the family of the king?
Are his children to succeed him? If they are no better than
anybody else, that will be mischievous. But, says the lover of royalty,
the king, though he might, will not hand on his power to his children.
That, however, is hardly to be expected, and is too much
to ask of human nature. (Aristotle 2001: 1201)

God gives not kings the style of gods in vain,
For on his throne his scepter do they sway,
And as their subjects ought them to obey,
So kings should fear and serve their god again
If then ye would enjoy a happy reign.
(James VI/I 1603: A2)

Hamlet — The body is with the King, but the King is
not with the body. The King is a thing.
Guildenstern — A thing, my lord?
Hamlet — Of nothing.
(Shakespeare 2006: 360-1)

1. The Staging of Kin(g)ship and Power, Between Affirmation and Negation

What is at stake, and what changes take place, when an actor plays the part of a king before a live audience? Will the performance affirm the supreme virtue, perhaps even the divine right of the monarch and his dynas-

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ty, or will it expose the human frailties of the ruler and his regime, showing how kingship risks degeneration into tyranny and being (self-)negated? Will audience members necessarily believe in the efficacy of the actor's impersonation of a heroic, godlike or at least sacred king, or might they perceive that the actor is only a 'shadow' of the real 'thing'?

Numerous theatre traditions throughout world history have confronted these questions in a variety of ways, their distinct cultural contexts shaping differences in the portrayal of kings either divine or mortal, in relation to crucial religious and political differences. The most important of surviving ancient Egyptian ritual dramas, which has been called "The Mystery Play of the Succession" (Frankfort 1978: 123-39) entailed the playing of the part of the new Pharaoh by the allegedly divine king himself, and supporting roles by royal princes, priests, and court attendants. In this case, then, presentation supersedes representation. The ritual drama's script and props – featuring the 'qeni', a kind of stomacher, worn during the climactic embrace between the new Pharaoh and his recently deceased predecessor – are used not only to enact but to effectuate the continuity, indeed the eternal life of the Egyptian realm, through the transformation of the old king into Osiris, god of the night and of the dead, and of his son the new king into Horus, god of the day and of the living (Frankfort 1978: 124).[1] Presentational, apotropaic as well as commemorative criteria also take precedence in such ritual dramas as the Mayan "Rabinal Achi", still sung and danced by the Quiché speakers of highland Guatemala, whose performance counteracts malevolent curses and connects their reenactment of the story of the famous king Quicab with the maintenance of order in both the state and cosmos (Tedlock 2003). A similar objective, if expressed in more representational terms, can be seen in Kalidasa's classical Sanskrit drama Abhijnanasakuntala ("The Recognition of Sakuntala"), which concludes by celebrating the reunion of the hero-king Dusyanta with his semi-divine wife Sakuntala and their son Bharata, destined to become the entire world's benevolent ruler (Kalidasa 2008). While medieval Christian theologians and ecclesiastical authorities would eventually promote stagings of Jesus' miracles, sufferings, death and resurrection as a means of affirming the power and glory of the King of Heaven, the "Passion" and "Mystery" plays also made room for critiques and satires of kingship, in figures like the ranting and raving tyrant Herod.[2] As secular, professional theatre emerged in early

[1] On the ritual drama of Abydos and other ancient Egyptian theatrical ceremonies, see also Gaster 1950: 380-403, and Zarrrilli, McConachie, Williams, and Sorgenfrei 2006: 53-84.

[2] On medieval religious drama in general, see Beadle (ed.) 1994, and on the ranting and raving figure of King Herod, who typically appears in the Mystery plays of "Herod and the Magi" and "The Slaughter of the Innocents", see Beadle and King (eds) 1999, es-

modern Europe, concomitant with the rise of both absolutism and neo-republicanism, questionings and de-sacralizations of abusive kingship gain prominence in several histories and tragedies by Marlowe, Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca, Corneille, and other leading playwrights.[3] Especially since the French Revolution, the foolish, invalid, phantasmatic, or caricatured king, often cast as the embodiment of an outmoded or oppressive world order, has become a featured character in a wide range of plays and musicals, such as Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Pirandello's *Henry IV*, and Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*. To use Robert Weimann's apposite terms, the Western theatrical King has been dislodged from his honoured ceremonial 'state' or throne in the upstage locus, to his place of demystification and potential ridicule in the downstage *platea*.[4]

Against the arguments and performances of 'lovers of royalty' like Egyptian pharaonic adherents, Isocrates and King James I, there thus has flourished a long and influential line of disdainers of royalty, whose sceptical positions have also been expressed on public stages. If the radical extremes of Hamlet's imagined annihilation of the king, or of the full frontal nudity of 'The Emperor's New Clothes' fable have rarely if ever been performed, thorough and complex dismantlings of kingship have. These include the topos of the 'king-as-beggar', in epic poetry strategically used by Homer's Odysseus to reclaim his throne and title, but very differently applied by the actor of Shakespeare's King of France (in *All's Well That Ends Well*) to remind his audience of his own humble human condition, and to request applause: "The King's a beggar, now the play is done" (Shakespeare 2008: epilogue 1).

'Kingship and Disempowerment' therefore pertains as much as 'Kingship and Power' to this monographic section of *Skenè* 4.2. This is not, however, to suggest that the two tragedies in question here – Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Shakespeare's *Richard II* (designated as a "Tragedie" in its 1597 first quarto edition)[5] – consistently affirm or negate kingship, and

pecially pages 65-74 and 88-97, as well as Weimann 1987: 64-77. Hamlet's famous complaint against loud, bombastic, and exaggerated players specifically targets the acting style that out-Herods Herod.

[3] For these authors' influential plays on kings in crisis, see Marlowe, *Edward II* (Marlowe 2016), Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* (Shakespeare 2006, 2005, and 2015), Calderon de la Barca, *La vida es sueño* ("Life Is a Dream") (Calderon de la Barca 1997) and *El gran teatro del mundo* ("The Great Theatre of the World") (Calderon de la Barca 2007), and Corneille, *Le Cid* (Corneille 1980).

[4] For an elaboration of the contrast between *locus* ('locality') and *platea* ('place'), and their relationship with the actor's "figurenposition", see Weimann 1987: 208-37.

[5] Citations of *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* are taken from Aeschylus 2013, and Shakespeare 2011, respectively.

decisively exalt or challenge the powers of the monarchic institution. These are not political or philosophical treatises but complex, dynamic plays, and while they notably differ in terms of their respective cultural contexts, stagecrafts, and receptions, they share dialectical and ambiguous patterns of representing the words and actions of their kingly protagonists. As the four following essays demonstrate, both Aeschylus and Shakespeare dramatise situations of extreme political crisis, where the state's current ruler is under so much pressure to maintain his legitimacy that he attempts manoeuvres of material and especially verbal control paradoxically destined to escape control, and sabotage their declared intent. A crucial element of both these tragic scenarios is the kings' self-aggravated undoing of their own regal powers through the very effort of maintaining those same powers. In this regard, they are both haunted and brought down by the familial prerogatives and ensuing rivalries identified by Aristotle as a built-in weakness of dynastically-inclined monarchies. In short, kinship both perpetuates and undermines kingship.

Thus in *Seven Against Thebes*, the rational, level-headed Eteocles, raised from childhood to be a king, makes all the necessary, well-considered preparations to defend his city against the attacking Argive armies, and admirably deciphers the presumptuous, often sacrilegious hubris of his opponents' arrogant and boastful champion-leaders. Yet the Theban king's own pride and reckless desires to vanquish his elder brother, despite or even because of his awareness of the potent "Ara" or Curse relentlessly pursuing their Labdacid line, impel him to fight a duel that can only end in his self-destruction. For his part, Richard II, son of the heroic 'Black Prince' Edward, implements royal privilege to sanction and then nullify a trial by combat between the lords Mowbray and his first cousin Bolingbroke. His attempt at imposing his regal authority backfires, as he blatantly favours his blood relation. At the same time, he cannot fully divert attention from his own complicity in the murder of his uncle the Duke of Gloucester, and its ensuing cover-up. Following this débacle, Richard will undergo a series of checks and defeats that reveal the inadequacy and eventual impotence of the very trappings and signs of kingship that supposedly would uphold his sovereignty, through his deposition, imprisonment, and valiant but futile struggle against his assassins.

Still, a first reading or viewing of these plays would suggest that they have little in common, and that even their respective king-protagonists have such mutually contrasting personalities, relationships with others, legendary-historical backgrounds, ideological frames of reference, and dramaturgical articulations that they would not merit critical juxtaposition, let alone comparison. In fact, only one of the essays (by Robert S. Miola) does pursue direct comparison between the two plays. Taken togeth-

er, however, the four studies reveal several crucial ways by which *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* can be instructively connected. As already noted, both Aeschylus and Shakespeare dramatise the complex, multiple imbrications of kinship with kingship, with a focus on the ambiguously legitimising and de-legitimising dynamics of hereditary monarchy. Kingship entails dominion over territory and resources, but frequently deprives the monarch's close relatives some share in that dominion, and/or reduces their property holdings: conflict and crisis almost inevitably will ensue, as witnessed in both Eteocles' and Richard's stories. Although Shakespeare's version of King Richard's Christian English world does not allow for the display, decoration, and supplication of life-sized statues of multiple deities so prominently and compellingly staged in Aeschylus' ancient Greek play, it expresses a shared awareness that ritual-based communications and manifestations of divine power can be flawed, insufficient, or cynically arbitrary. At least this is Eteocles' more fifth-century BCE sophistic than heroic age viewpoint, as both Anton Bierl and Alessandro Grilli explain; parallel doubts about the coherence and sanctity of traditional ceremonies are shown by the capricious and indeed ludicrous rituals of gage-throwing and royal pardoning in *Richard II*.[6] This de-sanctification process reaches an almost farcical climax in 5.3 when the "shrill-voiced suppliant" (74) Duchess of York kneels and begs the new King Henry Bolingbroke to pardon her son Aumerle, against the wishes of the latter's father Duke of York, who is also on his knees. After Henry recognises that "Our scene is altered from a serious thing / And now changed to 'The Beggar and the King'" (78-9), he does grant his pardon, prompting the Duchess to declare "A god on earth thou art" (135). If the Duchess's bald simplification of the divine right of kings doctrine strikes a comically profane note, serious and sacred strains resonate in the play's recurring personifications of England's "earth" as both mother and child, alternately life-giving, neglected, and blood-soaked. These tropes significantly recall the Aeschylean figuration of Thebes and its earth as a nurturing Mother-goddess, yet one who will drink her sons' mutually-spilled blood, providing them with the space that suffices for a grave (815-20). Finally, and most suggestively, the scripts of these two tragedies about doomed kings insistently explore the nuances, complexities, and ambivalences of language and signification in multiple registers, from birdflight omens and frightening meteors through non-verbal wailings and invisible daemonic curses to a variety of human utterances and speech-acts, especially illocutionary ones. The breath of kings, as Elena Pellone and David Schalkwyk demonstrate, is essential to their potentially heroic and

[6] See Liebler in Woodbridge and Berry 1992, especially pp. 232-9.

godlike power, but being mere breath, it also determines their fragility and vulnerability.

2. "A Play Full of Ares", "I am Richard II", and Other Potential Responses

By fortuitous chance, the dramatisations of kingship and power in *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* also can be linked through the strong, revealing impressions that they made on their first audiences. It is rare to have surviving testimonies of contemporary responses to specific Shakespeare plays, and even more rare to have ones to specific plays by the classical Athenian dramatists. Yet in this case, we can be sure that both these plays not only had continuous and widespread appeal for several decades after their respective first productions, but also that at least Richard II seems to have sparked an overt reaction from the monarch who was at the time Shakespeare's patron, Queen Elizabeth I herself. Gorgias and Aristophanes record how *Seven Against Thebes* became known and admired as a "play full of Ares", providing lessons for organising and managing defences against sieges,[7] while there are strong hints that Elizabeth did interpret the Earl of Essex's specially commissioned revival of *Richard II* as an admonition directed at her: the Queen did allow herself to be quoted as saying "I am Richard II, know ye not that?".[8] Before I devote close attention and consideration to the Elizabethan anecdote, I will briefly assess the implications of the purported "full of Ares" status of *Seven Against Thebes*.

As re-confirmed by the recent publication of a collection of scholarly essays on the subject (Torrance 2017), there is no question that Aeschylus' great tragedy, focused as it is on a city in a state of siege and facing an imminent final attack, dwells on matters of warfare under the influence of Ares. Moreover, the play was first staged only thirteen years after the Persian invasion of Athens and burning of the Acropolis, as part three of a trilogy (following the now lost *Laius* and *Oedipus*) dedicated to the cursèd house of the Labdacids, rulers of Thebes and heirs to its foundation by Cadmus and the surviving warriors born from his sowing of a slain dragon's teeth. This climactic play thus realises the full-scale fratricidal and autochthonic violence prepared by the two preceding ones. It devotes full attention to military conflict, expressed first in Eteocles' long speech of exhor-

[7] See the essay by Alessandro Grilli in this issue, especially pages 80-2.

[8] On Elizabeth's statement and its implications, see Hammer 2008, especially pages 30-4, the "Introduction" by Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin to their Oxford World's Classics edition of *Richard II* (Shakespeare 2011), especially pp. 2-9, and most recently Greenblatt 2018, 16-23.

tation to his adult male subjects – now Thebes' soldier-defenders as well as "citizens of Cadmus" (l. 1) – then in his tense confrontation with the terrified young women of the city, followed by the central scene of the king's repudiation of the besiegers' threats hubristically (except in the case of the wise prophet Amphiaraus) emblazoned on their great round shields, and finally his arming for the decisive, fatal encounter with his brother Polyneices. The consequences of this catastrophic duel, which simultaneously and ambiguously saves the polis but extinguishes the male heirs of the Labdacid genos, bring the play to its close with the Messenger's report and the Chorus' mixed victory song for their city / threnody for the fallen king and his brother. Thus the famous fifth-century orator Gorgias had every reason to recognise that *Seven Against Thebes* is "full of Ares", a comment which may be echoed by Aeschylus himself in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, during his dramatic poetry contest with the recently deceased Euripides, challenger to his supreme playwright's throne in Hades (the basic parallel with the agonistic plot-line of Oedipus' rival sons is at least implicit).[9] Yet though the Aristophanic character claims that his play infused warlike spirit into its spectators, and the twelfth-century Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes praises the Aeschylean Eteocles for his actions as a perfect leader and general,[10] can we be sure that *Seven Against Thebes* stands as an homage to militarism? As Stephen Halliwell notes in his edition of *The Frogs*, the tragedy "concerns the mutually fatal encounter between Oedipus's sons, Eteokles and Polyneices (and is therefore hardly an encouragement to martial valour!)".[11] For however much the defending King fulfils the mission of a capable civic commander and protector, he cannot escape the facts that he is both under a heavy familial curse, and acting in defiance of the pact that he had made with his brother to annually alternate their sovereignty. Eteocles could listen to the pleas of the Chorus to desist from a battle that is as much a personal as a political one, but he chooses not to. If the Theban maidens escape the hideous fate of capture, rape, and sexual enslavement that they graphically foresee in their powerful stasimon (327-32), they and their fellow citizens must face the contentious aftermath of the battle, which leads to the tragic end of Antigone and the family of the succeeding, tyrannical ruler Creon. Fittingly enough, the Ares that fills *Seven Against Thebes* has a remorselessly destructive as well as valorous spirit, which takes no prisoners. As Alessandro Grilli argues, the play casts Eteocles as the "good brother," and makes him exemplary in his conduct—to use the

[9] For extended quotation and treatment of this scene, see Grilli in this issue.

[10] Ibid.

[11] For Halliwell's comment, see his edition of Aristophanes 2016: 288 (note to line 1021).

script's own metaphor—as ship-captain of the militarized state in its time of extreme crisis. Yet, as Anton Bierl underlines, the cries and viewpoints of other voices, especially female ones, also are heard throughout the play, qualifying the potential effect of complete and consistent exemplarity.

It is indeed the notion of the King as an exemplar, whether positive or negative, that gained prominence during the Middle Ages, and persisted into the early modern era to inform the script of *Richard II*, but even more, some contemporary receptions of it. At the turning point moment of his disastrous return from his failed campaign in Ireland, Richard himself regales his handful of loyal followers with an eloquent disquisition on the exemplary, instructive fates of his royal predecessors:

> For God's sake let us sit upon the ground
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings,
> How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
> Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
> Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed –
> All murdered. For within the hollow crown
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king
> Keeps death his court, and there the antic sits,
> Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
> Allowing him a breath, a little scene
> To monarchize, be feared and kill with looks,
> Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
> As if this flesh which walls about our life
> Were brass impregnable, and humoured thus
> Comes at the last and with a little pin
> Bores through his castle wall – and farewell king.
> (3.2.155-70)

Much fine commentary has been devoted to this extraordinary speech, and further fine insights are provided by Pellone and Schalkwyk in their contribution to this special issue. I therefore will limit myself here to noting how the king first invokes the Deity, and then insists that he and his friends sit humbly upon the ground, the same "gentle earth" that he had greeted a few moments before, at once "weeping, smiling" with his own "royal hands" (10-12). Physically extending the play's metaphors of England as garden and an alternately fertile and abused earth-mother, Richard thus enacts a radical levelling of himself and his royal privileges. He does so in tandem with his verbal repetition of "deposed", that corroborates the decline of his sceptred sway, but initiates his ascent towards philosophical detachment and insight.

The point that Shakespeare's king himself recognises his abject vulnerability, and his own heritage of sudden usurpation, was apparently not

lost on the first audiences of *Richard II*. Queen Elizabeth's notorious comment "I am Richard II, know ye not that?" is the fitting 'punch-line' to the sometimes grotesquely comical, sometimes poignantly tragic and pitiful failed coup attempt hastily devised and ineptly led by her former favourite the Earl of Essex in February of 1601. In fact, Elizabeth is also reported to have somewhat cryptically added that "He that will forget God, will also forget his benefactors; this tragedy [Shakespeare's *Richard II*?] was played forty times in open streets and houses".[12] Rather than to the play, the Queen might have meant her hyperbolic statement to refer to Essex and his botched project to rouse up public support for his scheme to constrain Elizabeth to dismiss his rivals at court and confirm James VI of Scotland as her successor. Still, her statement bespeaks a recognition that the deposition of Richard II held strong theatrical appeal to her contemporaries, implying that she too could become a mere player-monarch. Even if this implication is an oblique one, Elizabeth's remarks convey a sense of her own precariousness, and of the physical frailties she was facing in her late sixties, as Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin have lucidly explained.[13] If she was potentially a Richard II, then she was willing to acknowledge that her human, transitory body made her susceptible to the ambitions and pressures applied to her by her very own favoured subjects, in the way that her predecessor of more than two centuries before had experienced. Perhaps excessively, recent criticism of *Richard II* has invoked the medieval theory of the "king's two bodies", as studied by E.H. Kantorowicz, to underline and interpret the play's exposure of the physical fragility of the sovereign, a facet most likely perceived all too clearly by the ageing Queen Elizabeth.[14] While this political-theological theory does not figure prominently in the studies gathered here, it does implicitly inform the representation and understanding of these monarchs' relationships with divine order. Yet Queen Elizabeth's response was only one among thousands: a London citizen or Southwark teenager would have had different thoughts and feelings when witnessing King Richard's self-described reduction from "anointed king", confident that "the breath of worldly men cannot depose / The deputy elected by the Lord" (3.2.56-7), to the untitled, ordinary human being who does indeed "live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends. Subjected thus, / How can you say to me I am a king?" (3.2.175-7).

[12] See Dawson and Yachnin "Introduction", in Shakespeare 2011: 4.

[13] Ibid.

[14] On Kantorowicz's work and its influence on the study of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, especially *Richard II*, see Norbrook 1996.

3. Speaking, Acting, and Speech-Acts

One of Aristotle's best-known contentions is that *homo sapiens* is a political animal, but perhaps less famously the Stagorite identifies the capacity to speak a shared, intelligible language as the trait that enables humans to be political (Aristotle 2001: 1129). In short, government of the state depends on the use of complex words. To give but one basic example of this phenomenon, a king could not command without the verbal medium, refined and strengthened through rhetorical devices. Nor could he enlist the support of laws and narratives justifying his legitimacy over rival claims to the throne, often made by his nearest blood relations. Not coincidentally, then, all four essays in the monographical section of this issue of Skenè together focus on language, signification, speech-acts, and their ambivalent role in communicating the power – and limits thereon – of the king.

Anton Bierl's essay opens the section by accentuating how King Eteocles tries to affirm his military authority through rationalistic argumentation constructed to win debates, first against the female Chorus with their panicked utterances and emotional outbursts, then against the invading champions with their huge, menacing, and often boastful shields. Eteocles takes pains and enacts systematic measures to assert himself as an effective *strategos*, a self-styled helmsman of the ship of state who can navigate past the potentially disheartening interference of the lamenting maidens, and whose cleodonomantic skills will decipher the enemies' emblems of destruction and at the same time defuse their hubristic threat. The central pre-dramatic scene of the shields thus becomes a symbolic version of the military duels to come, providing a substitute for their violence and a proleptic confirmation of the Theban defenders' victory. As Bierl convincingly argues, Eteocles eventually undoes his own strategos status by insisting on the autochthonic showdown with his brother, that will simultaneously deploy the fraternal combatants' shared *miasma*, bring the curse to its culminating destruction of the genos, and confirm that the maidens' goos and reverent supplication of the city's protective gods has had more efficacy than the king's authoritative speaking as well as sophistic strategizing. Professor Bierl refines and expands the horizons of this religion-related analysis, emphasizing the play's Dionysiac qualities and linking its fratricidal plot to an ancient Mesopotamian ritual designed to achieve healing and purification through the reciprocal, sacrificial elimination of opposing forces. Ultimately, the palindromic Dionysiac patterns suggest how the polis is saved, through catharsis that also involves the audience, validating both the disabling of the shields' semiotic presumptions, and the reverent speaking and acting of the Chorus/community.

Thoroughly and carefully analysing the integral, dynamic rapport be-

tween semiotics and politics in *Seven Against Thebes*, Alessandro Grilli explains the play's expression of "epistemic fragmentation". While sharing Bierl's insight that the efficacy of speech-acts is at stake, Grilli argues that the play conveys positive endorsement of Eteocles' rationalistic approach to language and communication, all the way through the central *Redepaare* until the king's fatal choice to meet his brother in direct combat. He shows how Aeschylus' script sets in motion a conflict between on the one hand an Archaic Greek trust in the coherent sacred-magical properties of language, and on the other an understanding of reasoning and linguistic discourse as analytic means towards managing here-and-now reality. Since the former approach reflects aristocratic consciousness and social structures, while the second partakes of the democratic innovations of early fifth-century BCE Athens, the semiotic contrast is also a political one. As Professor Grilli clarifies, the reigning King Eteocles regards language as the instrumental vehicle for relaying factual information and communicating practical decisions, while the Chorus of young maidens employ language to transmit sensory stimuli and release strong, complex emotions. An inevitable clash is thus played out through the mutual antipathy of these two ways of regarding language and its political potential. For Eteocles, the Theban maidens' emotionally charged agitations, along with their supplication of the gods' statues, pose an internal threat to the disciplined, well-coordinated defence of the city. He regards it as his duty to counter this threat with his intellectually controlled, analytic, and non-supersitious discourse, which guides his admirable management of resistance to the siege, and distinguishes him as the good brother, worthy of his name meaning 'true glory', opposed to his bad brother Polyneices, whose name means 'much strife'. Even Eteocles' ultimate yielding to the pressures of the family Curse, and his decision to ignore the pleas of the Chorus and fight the deadly duel with his brother, marks him as the noble and resolute hero-protector of the city. In this interpretation, his commitment to his polis-defending kingship may ultimately supersede traditional strictures of kinship, including the pollution brought by fraternal bloodletting. The speech-act of the play's final funeral lament thus can be seen as a key step in the process of joyfully restoring order, and renewing the life of the polis.

Charting important similarities between *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* as well as *Richard III*, Robert S. Miola focuses on the crucial speech-act of cursing, i.e. the dramatic speaking of imprecations that have the power to cause harm and bring down supernatural punishment. The vindictive capabilities of genos relationships loom large here, as Oedipus' curse on his sons, now personified as an implacable, manipulative Fury or Erinys, insists on the mutual spilling of the two brothers' crime-infected blood. This cycle of familial vengeance disables the project of the king

to rule according to his appointed political mandate, as the tragedies of past generations – as well as the coming one of Eteocles' sister Antigone – come to haunt and overwhelm the present moment. As Miola succinctly puts it, "Theban history is not primarily national and political but familial and personal". If the personified "Ara" of the Labdacid house in *Seven Against Thebes* operates with irresistible force, by contrast the curses uttered in *Richard II* lack efficacious power. The king himself, as well as his queen, speak vehement maledictions, but their words fail to accomplish their aim. Instead, as Miola elucidates, the inefficacious human speech-act of cursing in this play works as a foil to the overriding divine speech-act of God's primal curse on Adam and Eve, its providentially ordering as well as prophetically dooming powers being felt by numerous characters, including at the close the new king Henry IV. This same Christian conception of God's omnipotent justice becomes evident in Shakespeare's other King Richard play, where Margaret's seemingly potent curses are actually mere pointers towards the primary and far superior agency of divine retribution. Deftly returning to analysis of *Seven Against Thebes*, Miola illuminates further revealing links between Aescylus' and Shakespeare's plays, for example showing how "Eteocles is both victim of the curse and its enactor", and how Bolingbroke, in trying to repeat and transfer God's cursing of Cain on to Exton, only succeeds in making the guilt of primal sinning redound upon himself: "The curser utters God's curse and is himself cursed". Here especially the question of the kin(g)ship syndrome re-emerges, since the Cain and Abel fratricide finds its anxious, murderous, and destructive parallels in the contests between the cousins Richard and Bolingbroke, and between the brothers Eteocles and Polyneices.

In the final essay of the monographic section, the intricacies and paradoxes of regal speech-acts take centre stage. Incisively applying J.L. Austin's distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech-acts to the evolution of Richard's utterances in the play, Elena Pellone and David Schalkwyk extend a key observation of Miola's essay, namely that the king gains respect, humanity, and wisdom as he loses his political power. Most urgently and originally, the co-authors demonstrate that Richard's disempowerment as a king chiastically enables his empowerment as an actor, a theatrical presence who commands the attention and empathy of his audience. The essay derives its own power from a convincing, practice-based rebuke to the unjustified and distorted twentieth- and early twenty-first-century British theatrical convention of playing Richard as a weak, capriciously effeminate ruler, often exhibiting clichéd 'gay' behaviours. Pellone and Schalkwyk thus bring readers back to the actual protagonist of Shakespeare's script, and his historical model. By so doing, they sustain their persuasive thesis that the king paradoxically assumes genuine

power once he sheds his ritual apparatus and ceremonial rhetoric. Richard experiences a process wherein he gains a new-found illocutionary authority precisely at the moment of his self-divesting, and of his surrendering of the crown to Bolingbroke, allowing him to attain a fecund poetic eloquence and perlocutionary charisma hitherto beyond his reach. In solitary confinement as an imprisoned character, the king learns to confront, accept, and share his human vulnerability, and thus to connect with his audience through a shared recognition of common humanity. In this way, whether as king or beggar, or any role in between, he is anything but alone. Nor, as Richard's listeners and fellow players in the theatre of life, are we.

How can this be? How can a king be rescued from the violent bane of curses, from vengeful kin-murders, from the snowy mockery conducted by antic death within his hollow crown, from the oblivion of turning into mere dust and passing through the guts of a beggar? Precisely through a clinching paradox: "But what'er I be, / Nor I nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased / With being nothing" (5.5.38-41). As King, the King indeed exists as a thing of nothing, a mere walking shadow… but as a poor player/humble mortal, his shadow takes on substance, and he can be imagined a thing of everything, in a well-peopled community whose love conquers hate.

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Anton Bierl*

The *mise en scène* of Kingship and Power in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*: Ritual Performativity or *Goos*, Cledonomancy and Catharsis

Abstract

This contribution focuses on Eteocles' attempts to secure and assert his authority as king and military leader against the female chorus and both the semiotic and self-referential power struggle in the central scene regarding the description of the shields. The extensive pre-dramatic scene of the ecphrastic accumulation of visual signs is interpreted as a symbolic agonistic strife, the theatrical substitute of actual violence. Cledonomantic speech serves as a performative means to convey the oracular anticipation and enigmatic interpretation of the events. Moreover, the paper sheds some light on the mutual reciprocity and circular interaction of fatal entanglements in Thebes and its ruling family. Seen in a cultural perspective of a western Asian healing ritual, the description of the shields can be read as a *mise en abyme* and *mise en scène* of the entire play about mutual destruction and the resulting salvation of the polis.

Keywords: Aeschylus; Babylonian healing and purification ritual; cledonomancy; *choreia*; Dionysian palintropic harmony; *euphemia*; fear and lament; *mise en abyme*; power struggle with words and bodily regime; *Seven against Thebes*; supplication

Introduction: The King as Military Leader in a Situation of Crisis

Classical Greek tragedy preferably stages mythic kings of heroic times in dramatic situations that can be partially associated with Athenian political issues valid at the time of the actual performance. These kings are, in the perspective of Dionysian distortion (Brelich 1982; Bierl 2011), often highly problematic as they tend to be represented with a focus on tyrannical authority. We only recall Oedipus, Creon or Pentheus in famous tragedies like Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone* as well as Euripides' *Bacchae*.

In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* Eteocles' behaviour as king is at the

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centre of interest.[1] His position is particularly questionable (Lesky 1961; von Fritz 1962; Golden 1964; Podlecki 1964; Cameron 1970; Brown 1977; Aloni 2002; Edmunds 2017), since he and his brother Polynices are under the curse of Oedipus. At first glance he seems to act like an enlightened rational ruler of contemporary Athens in 467 BCE, the horizon of the audience. By repressing all cosmic and religious interconnectedness Eteocles does not recognize the power of the gods and other irrational forces that transcend human control. In Thebes, the tragic location of the Other par excellence, functioning to some extent as the anti-Athens, where opposites collapse in mutual violence and self-destruction (Zeitlin 1986; Bierl 1991: 54-89, esp. 54-8; Seaford 2012: 102-4), Oedipus' sons are engaged in a fierce civil war. This situation is compatible with the quintessential Theban constellation of regressive circularity that characterizes even the city's mythic origin (Zeitlin 1986). After Oedipus' self-blinding and exile, both his sons agree to share the power in Thebes in peace. But soon the younger Eteocles expels the older Polynices by force, who raises the claim of the primogenital right to rule. With the Argive army, assembled by his step-father Adrastus, the 'Inescapable', a name bearing clear associations with Hades and Death, Eteocles' brother therefore fights against his own city. Polynices is about to lead the decisive strike to win back his kingdom, in his eyes a legitimate act. But stasis, civil war, especially between brothers, is regarded as the worst case for any civic rule. Two legitimate claims based on justice (*dike*) stand in a fierce clash. In Thebes, the place of autochthonous and regressive circularity, this difference of polar opposites must collapse into a catastrophe of mutual auto-destruction.

Eteocles, the ruling king in the city, allegedly acts in accord with the norms of a government that leads a legitimate war of defence. Protecting the fatherland, the mother soil, the city gods and their temples against illegitimate assailants, Eteocles focuses his entire energy on unity and cohesion to safeguard the city and to prevent the enemies from conquering it. Callinus' and Tyrtaeus' elegies as appeals to the male citizens in arms are famous examples of how to behave as men in a phalanx, bravely defending their city and families. Or we recall Troy under Hector, besieged by the Greek army.[2] In the situation of *stasis*, especially condensed into the

[1] The text is cited after Page 1972 (occasionally with slight changes); the translation is mainly taken from Smyth 1926; commentaries are: Lupas and Petre 1981; Hutchinson 1985; for further literature see the useful summary by Torrance 2007; among others Fraenkel 1957; Cameron 1970; Burnett 1973; Cingano 2002; Brown 1977; Thalmann 1978; Zeitlin 1982/2009; Judet de la Combe 1987; Wiles 1993; Aloni et al. 2002; Avezzù 2003: 68-78; Stehle 2005; Giordano-Zecharya 2006; Amendola 2006: 45-59; 2010; Trieschnigg 2016; Griffith 2017; Abbate 2017: 71-97.

[2] On the parallel of Thebes in *Septem* with Troy in the *Iliad*, see Ieranò 2002; Gruber

war between brothers, the attacker from the outside is seen, from the perspective of the defender inside, as an illegitimate perpetrator, breaching all norms of civilization. By attempting to burn down the walls and fighting his own people, the assailant is stylized as a primordial force, who betrays his homeland and offends the polis gods, trespassing the norms of Zeus' order and justice, *dike*, in complete *hybris*.

In this paper I will focus on Eteocles' attempts to secure and assert his military authority, first against the female Chorus haunted by panic (1-368), then in his reaction of how to counteract the threat of the attacking seven heroes chosen by lot in the central scene of the shields (369-652). Next to the initial dispute about words, attitudes and gestures between the emotional Chorus and the rational ruler in the first part of the play, I will explore the power struggle about symbols and signs in the ensuing long, iconic, self-referential and thus very pre-dramatic scene.[3] The Scout highlights the terror of the single Argive heroes by describing the emblems of their shields, whereas Eteocles reverts the semiotic potential against its own bearers. The common thread for analysing the king's behaviour is his concern about the special nature of signs. In the extreme situation the ruler wishes to control and regiment not only his subjects' language (Cameron 1970), but also all their extra-linguistic expressions, such as their utterances of the voice, their soundscape and body movements (Nooter 2017: 94-6). The king does not even refrain from checking the modes of ritual practice and the attitude towards the gods (Stehle 2005; Giordano-Zecharya 2006).

The Chorus and Personal Responsibility

In this play "full of war" (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1021) the city is represented by a Chorus of young maidens. This fact gives the king's behaviour a specific and even more nuanced colouring on the range of gender and age difference. In the typical manner of tragedy the Chorus splits up in various overlapping voices and identities (Calame 2017: 93-124): at the same time, and in polyphony and intermediality, the Chorus can shift between its role as character, i.e. girls in Thebes during the attack, and its function, representing the community, i.e. Athens, and having a general, hermeneutic, affective or emotive, civic, performative and ritual voice (Bierl 2001: esp. 11-104 [Bierl 2009: 1-82]; Gruber 2009: 44-102, 500-28; Gagné and Hopman 2013: 1-28; Calame 2013; Calame 2017: 93-124; esp. on *Septem*, Trieschnigg 2009). It goes without saying that a maiden chorus is very differ-

2009: 179-85.

[3] On Attic tragedy, esp. Aeschylus, as pre-dramatic theatre, see Bierl 2010.

ent compared to a chorus of men, citizens, elders, slaves, foreigners or even ephebes, young warriors. In this particular situation of an imminent military threat they are seized by fear (Schnyder 1995: 66-72; Gruber 2009: 164-71; Visvardi 2015: 147-78), whereas men are summoned to behave bravely without any emotion (Gruber 2009: 172-88). Moreover the Chorus of young maidens incorporates the entire lyric tradition of the *partheneia* (Calame 1994-95). Yet despite its female character the Chorus is always open toward the male population of the polis of Thebes, mirrored in the city of Athens of 467 BCE, whose citizens sit in the audience, still remembering the traumatic experiences of the Persian attack in 480/79 BCE when Athens was captured and destroyed. The inner space of Thebes thus to some extent fuses with the rows in the cavea of the Athenian Theatre of Dionysus, bulwarking itself against the enemy from outside with a wall and the statues of gods that delimit the stage.

Aeschylus is known for being obscure and riddling.[4] He lays special emphasis on divine prophecy, on symbols, motifs that allude to a higher meaning or mysterious predetermination in mythic family constellations. Similar to the Atridae in *Oresteia*, also in this trilogy about the Labdacids – unfortunately in this case the first two plays, *Laius* and *Oedipus*, except for a few fragments, are not preserved – we pursue a long chain of hidden entanglements and open transgressions that partly determine the figures' actual doings in the last play, the *Seven*. Prophecies and curses work over generations and build a loose network of counterfactual motivation for the behaviour of the main agents.[5] Thus Laius' doings have a certain effect on Oedipus', and his total downfall, followed by the cursing of his sons, influences the next generation in *Seven*. At the same time, it is not simply fate – or in this case the Curse (*Ara*) and the Erinys – that drives men, as has been the critical opinion for a long time, but human beings are completely responsible for their actions too. They are not at the mercy of the gods, but act on their own, using free will (Del Corno 1998: esp. 53-6). As in Homer, the motivation for someone's actions has a double nature, a divine *and* a human component.

[4] See Aristoph. *Ran.* 924-32, 945-7; *schol. ad* Aesch. *PV* 610. In this regard he is similar to Heraclitus; Diogenes Laertius 9.6 reports that Timon of Phleius called Aeschylus the riddler (αἰνικτής) (DK A 1) and Cicero, *de fin.* 2.15 "the Dark" (Σκοτεινός); see also Lucretius 1.635-40; Strabo 14.25; on the similarity of thought between Heraclitus and Aeschylus see also Seaford (2012: 240-57), who explains it with reference to "monetisation", the increasing influence of money after its recent introduction. In a problematic manner Poli Palladini (2016: 175-216) argues for a "mystifying poetics" in *Sept.* through which Aeschylus confuses the spectators "so that they will not notice the logical fallacies in the interpretation" (201).

[5] On the counterfactual logic in *Oresteia*, see Käppel 1998.

Cledonomancy and *euphemia*: Eteocles vs the Chorus

Critics have connected the central scene of the allotment of the warriors comprising the description of their shields with cledonomancy, the divination through interpreting chance remarks, utterances, voices or random events, for many years (Cameron 1970; Zeitlin 1982/2009: 46-7/28-9).[6] This superstitious and uncanny concept – widened from the purely acoustic and linguistic level to the kinetic, visual and performative in general – is also behind the first part of the *Seven*, which, also due to the later alleged change at line 653 in Eteocles's behaviour,[7] is not so easy to understand (Stehle 2005). Κληδών, "the omen, the presage contained in a chance utterance" (*LSJ*) (from κλέω) – i.e., everything that has to do with speech and voice, also the invocation and name – is associated with a hidden foreboding meaning. Aeschylus applies this archaic concept for creating his enigmatic poetics in *Septem*, composing three larger dramatic arcs of suspense as carriers of higher wisdom. He places the scene of the shields at the exact centre. In order to avoid negative effects from the gods, uttering the taboo word, men invent the device of euphemism. And this applies, of course, also to the performative utterances and kinetics of the Chorus of the young maidens who shriek and scream in panic and sheer desperation, clinging to the statues of the city gods to supplicate for help in view of the announced attack. The king, on the contrary, does everything to silence inappropriate wailing and *goos*. As commander-in-chief he feels his responsibility for the well-being of the community and the city. Efficient defence consists in the manly and brave behaviour of closing the phalanx. Therefore Eteocles does everything to establish an efficient screen against the enemy. He is afraid of the fact that this uncontrolled female behaviour of panic, fear and terror could affect the warriors' readiness to defend the walls, triggering an overall panic in the city. According to military logic, fear, lament, quick, uncontrolled and fleeing movement toward the statues of the gods, crouching down in front of them, touching and imploring in desperation are seen to have a negative effect on military discipline, dissolving the ranks, the formation of the armed forces. *Goos*, the wild utterance of lament, is regarded as *dysphemia*, a negative language and inappropriate sound in respect to the gods, who instead demand *euphemia*, pious and devotional address in prayer.[8]

[6] On the concept, see Peradotto 1969: 2-10. On Eteocles' concern with the hermeneutics of signs, see Judet da la Combe 1987; Abbate 2017: 90-7.

[7] On overviews of this issue, see Conacher 1996: 69-70 and Stehle 2005: 102n7. See also Vidal-Naquet 1990: 271-8.

[8] For more discussion of *eu-* and *dysphemia*, see Stehle 2004 and Gödde 2011; on the relevance of this concept in the *Oresteia*, see Gödde 2011: 95-148; in *Agamemnon* Bierl

After all, the discrepancy between the king and the Chorus means a deep divide in matters of religion, prayer and the behaviour towards gods in general (Brown 1977 against Hutchinson 1985: 73 and Amendola 2006: 45-59; 2010; in general Torrance 2007: 51-3). Eteocles' martial attitude is deeply grounded in the political sphere and intellectual climate of Athens in 467 BCE, as he claims a supremacy of men over gods in matters of the city. In his few prayers he actually wishes the gods to be allies in the battle, *symmachoi* (266). He almost cynically envisions that gods will leave the sacked city after its capture (216-18), since there is nothing left that would make them stay.[9] On the contrary, the Chorus, oscillating in their perspective from girls to the entire population, regard the gods as the ultimate and highest beings in the universe, standing over human affairs (226-9). Therefore the maidens resort to constraining the gods by kneeling, by crowning and dressing the statues so that they achieve their goal of receiving protection from them. Their behaviour, in some respect, equals supplication. But instead of arriving as *hiketides* from outside to fall at the knees of a foreign king to plea for their life, protection and asylum from ensuing enemies, perhaps clinging to the holy altars in a shrine before, they supplicate and implore the statues (Hutchinson 1985: 74), leaving the king aside.[10] It is as if their *hiketeia*, their intense contact with the single statues of the city gods – they hectically run from one statue to the next and back again – would animate the divine images (Faraone 1992: 4-7, 13-28, 100-2; Steiner 2001: 112-17; against Johnston 2008). In Greek perception, statues can become almost alive, fusing with the god they represent (Versnel 1987; Gladigow 1990; Bremmer 2013: esp. 7-12). Thus, despite the leader's severe criticism of this dysphemic behaviour as well as his appeal to stop it and leave the statues, he ironically achieves his goal of the gods becoming *symmachoi.* It is as if they form and reinforce the defence line linked to them, backing up the wall, the towers and the gates that give shelter to the people inside the city. Moreover, while he is so keen to observe *euphemia*, he constantly uses

2017a (with emphasis on *goos* as *dysphemia*). On *goos* and lament, see Holst-Warhaft 1992; Dué 2006: esp. 8n21 (for further literature); and generally Alexiou 2002.

[9] Hutchinson (1985: xxxvi, 73) argues that Eteocles has trust in the gods as well. See also Amendola 2006; 2010.

[10] On ancient supplication, see Gould 1973; Naiden 2006. On the inscription of the ritual into the texture of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* totally based on it, see Gödde 2000. On the productive but unusual application of the ritual pattern, see Gruber 2009: 170. Gould (1973: 77-8, 97, 100) mentions only the contact with a sacred place, i.e. the altar or the hearth, but not with statues, if one intends to address someone through a god. Direct supplication of a god can only occur through another divine being, as it is the case in *Iliad* 1.498-527 when Thetis asks Zeus for help (see Gould 1973: 75-7).

dysphemia. He summons the wrong gods (Erinys and *Ara*, 70),[11] almost neglecting the Olympians besides mentioning Zeus (69), and evokes even the exodus of the polis gods after the capture (217-18); over and over again he insults and curses the maidens, who as a chorus closely connected with the gods fuse with the citizens and the polis religion.

To confirm this picture, it will be productive to have a closer look at the course of action in *Septem*.

First Part (1-368): A Struggle about the Right Behaviour Towards the Gods. Religious Pragmatism Against Popular Piety

At the very beginning, being confronted with the news of the further approaching attack of the Seven Champions, Eteocles as good ruler clearly manifests his military decisiveness to protect his city, deeply anchored in the Greek ideology of warfare and glory (1-9):

> Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια
> ὅστις φυλάσσει πρᾶγος ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως
> οἴακα νωμῶν, βλέφαρα μὴ κοιμῶν ὕπνῳ.
> εἰ μὲν γὰρ εὖ πράξαιμεν, αἰτία θεοῦ·
> εἰ δ' αὖθ', ὃ μὴ γένοιτο, συμφορὰ τύχοι, 5
> Ἐτεοκλέης ἂν εἷς πολὺς κατὰ πτόλιν
> ὑμνοῖθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν φροιμίοις πολυρρόθοις
> οἰμώγμασίν θ', ὧν Ζεὺς ἀλεξητήριος
> ἐπώνυμος γένοιτο Καδμείων πόλει.

> [Men of Cadmus's city, he who guards from the stern the concerns of the State and guides its helm with eyes untouched by sleep must speak to the point. For if we succeed, the responsibility is heaven's; [5] but if – may it not happen – disaster is our lot, Eteocles would be the one name shouted many times throughout the city in the citizens' resounding uproars and laments. From these evils may Zeus the Defender, upholding his name, shield the city of the Cadmeans!]

Eteocles addresses the citizens, that is the entire male population of Thebes – implying even the Chorus and thus the female population. The core message is in the very first line and functions like a motto of the play: the responsible leader "must speak the appropriate" – χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια (1). It will become essential that the king is keenly aware of his speech and

[11] They are identified in Aesch. *Eum.* 417. In contrast, Amendola (2010: 30-1) argues that the ruler summoned also these negative demons as personifications in order not to forget a single god for reaching his goal, the protection of the city. The Erinyes in their apotropaic function would thus anticipate already their transformation to benevolent women (*Eumenides*) in the *Oresteia*.

sign-production. From the very beginning the king is eager to exert his power and to control his people. Determined to defend his city Eteocles is a mirror of a rather rational contemporary Athenian *strategos*, but he is poorly interconnected with the cosmos and rather pragmatic in regard to the gods.

As we see have seen, the king is totally focused on the well-being and survival of the city. His actions are also driven by the insight and fear that in case of total defeat he would lose his elevated position of power. Eteocles knows the way of thinking of the masses. In case of a successful campaign he knows that due to their traditional religiosity they would attribute it to the God in general, Zeus, and to the other Olympians. But if he failed as *strategos*, he knows he alone would be held responsible. He is sure that he would meet massive criticism and lamentation all over the city, weakening his authority. In the typical manner of tragedy Aeschylus likes to self-referentially dress Eteocles' potential failure in choral and musical forms: Eteocles' name alone would "hymnically resound in wailing songs by the citizens" (ὑμνοῖθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν φροιμίοις πολυρρόθοις / οἰμώγμασίν θ', 6-7) as cause of the catastrophe. Due to his cledonomantic concern and playing with the etymology of his name "true fame", Eteocles tries to avoid a more drastic and realistic diction. As instantiation of *kleos* he still aims at praise in hymns and proems, but in view of the disaster they would paradoxically be linked with negative lament. The protest would hit him like a wave of anti-song, which in the form of *goos* the Chorus soon will intone in the parodos. Eteocles regards the people as potential danger for his position as king. Thus he envisages their reaction in case of capture as outright rebellion. Like Agamemnon in the *Iliad* he as king claims the special protection of Zeus, traditionally viewed as the king of the gods, in a rather secular and pragmatic manner. Thus he is eager to emphasize that Zeus the Defender should act according to his true name, and help to defend the city of Thebes as well as his position as steersman against the sea of negative voices. In Eteocles' both modern-sophistic and archaic-magic logic, calling Zeus by the name *Alexeterios*, he almost believes that he can force Zeus to make the protection true. But after the announcement of the actual assault Eteocles appeals to – besides addressees of rather traditional and popular religiosity, i.e. Zeus, Earth and "the gods that guard our city" – the Curse and the Erinys (69-70). The prayer to both these terrible gods comes close to *dysphemia* (Stehle 2005: 110-14). Only mentioning the possibility that the city might perish is dangerous. To pray that these chthonic forces should not extinguish the polis, "tearing it, in total destruction, out like a bush from the ground" (μή μοι πόλιν γε πρυμνόθεν πανώλεθρον / ἐκθαμνίσητε, 71-2), betrays and potentially disables his cledomomantic strategy, since merely by uttering the negative words they could come true. And indeed

this will be the outcome, at least for the royal household (cf. 1056, γένος ὠλέσατε πρυμνόθεν οὕτως). Through this early prayer, Eteocles shows that as descendant of the royal family he is firmly grounded in Thebes' ideology and mythic past that are constitutive of the city's precarious state of negative autochthony. In the riddling, earth-based utterance lies the truth. The gods should act like warriors and join the Theban forces, becoming the city's armed bulwark (γένεσθε δ' ἀλκή, 76; cf. ξυμμάχους εἶναι θεούς, 266).[12] He sees a common ground of interest (ξυνά, 76) between city and gods, and wishes to speak about this connection in the interest of the public (ξυνά): "for a State that prospers pays honours to its gods" (πόλις γὰρ εὖ πράσσουσα δαίμονας τίει, 77). This means that in his radical polis religion, gods and city are interdependent, the city guarantees the well-being of the gods. Thus they should also have the duty of joining the defence line. In the reverse conclusion he threatens not to honour the gods, if they will not fight with the troops. Therefore he also subscribes to "the saying that once a city is captured the gods abandon the city" (217-18). Just to utter this *logos* (218) is again an act of *dysphemia* (Stehle 2005: 115). However, on the other hand, he regards the appeal of the Chorus to the polis gods that they should never leave the city as ill-omened (219-25). Thus πειθαρχία, the rule of obedience, is for him the mantra and the mission of his political and strategic leadership, since it is "the mother of Success, the wife of Salvation" (πειθαρχία γάρ ἐστι τῆς εὐπραξίας / μήτηρ γυνὴ σωτῆρος· ὧδ' ἔχει λόγος, 224-5), citing again a popular saying. According to him even the gods must obey his orders. This tendency towards autarchy and autonomy from the divine, combined with the fear of losing control, comes close to totalitarian tyranny (Bierl 2017c).

From the very beginning of the play Eteocles prepares the men of Thebes for the military challenge. In his rational view it is a human, political responsibility to shield the city and its altars (10-20). Zeus or God, so to speak, also has some share in it (21-3), but now the seer foresees the attack as approaching through clear omens. This is why Eteocles calls the citizens to arms (24-38). The situation is immediately confirmed by the Scout, reporting about the terrible blood oath of the seven warriors and the allotment of the best warriors to the seven gates on the side of the Argive attackers (39-68, esp. 39-53). They address the oath to "Ares, Enyo and Fear who delights in blood" (45), sanctioning it with a bull-sacrifice in the shield (42-8). By touching the bloody victim with their hands (44) they receive

[12] Hutchinson (1985: 86) *ad loc.* believes "the chorus had prayed exactly this" in lines 130-4, 145-50, 214-15, 255. But this it is not the case since the girls invoked the gods that they should become their saviours and provide protection.

the energy of the animal and unite in ritual murder.[13] Moreover, satiating this terrible trinity of gods with blood, they activate them like the dead or bloodthirsty chthonic spirits. Ares is the central god of Thebes, who turns against his own city. In case they fail in their military action, the seven champions swear to give a libation to the city of Thebes with their blood (48), soaking the soil, i.e. *Ge*, the notorious grave for the blood of her own descendants.

On this basis, the Scout gives the advice, repeating the defence strategy of the king (62-4):

> σὺ δ’ ὥστε ναὸς κεδνὸς οἰακοστρόφος
> φάρξαι πόλισμα πρὶν καταιγίσαι πνοὰς
> Ἄρεως· βοᾷ γὰρ κῦμα χερσαῖον στρατοῦ.
>
> [So you, like the careful helmsman of a ship, secure the city before Ares’ blasts storm down upon it; for the wave of their army now crashes over the dry land.]

Throughout the play the approaching army is metaphorically envisaged as the acoustic impact of a wave in its natural power, but the oxymoron κῦμα χερσαῖον (64) makes clear that the army rushes like a noisy wave attacking from the land and hitting the walls of Thebes.

Since, according to tragic norms, the battle cannot be shown directly on the stage, its violence must be conveyed through words, voices and movement, and visualized in daringly synaesthetic scenes (Marinis 2012a). In the entire play Aeschylus does this, first, in the extensive passages (until line 757) anticipating the battle, then towards the end, in the part which reflects the result and its consequences (758-1004, with the later, inauthentic addition 1005-77). All culminates in the fight close to the seven gates, especially in the fatal outcome at the final one. Through the Scout’s announcement about the Seven (39-68, esp. 55-68) and Eteocles’ arrangements to deploy Theban combatants (282-6), the central scene of the counter-allotment of seven defenders is thus already prepared (369-652). But before the battle starts, we encounter long passages where the female Chorus is shown in fierce debates with the military commander (78-368, esp. 181-286). The king, trying to do his best to get the city ready for the attack, disputes with the maidens about the right behaviour, or the best practice, in such an extreme situation.

The Chorus, functioning mainly as the emotive voice, conveys *phobos* and *eleos*, the quintessential emotions of tragedy according to Aristot-

[13] On the magico-religious practice, see Guidorizzi 2002. On the oath-scene in general, see Torrance 2007: 48-51.

le, as explained in his *Poetics* (1449b24-8). The Chorus works like an inner, emotional focus that lets the spectator feel what is going on inside a city assaulted by the enemy. Playing the role of young maidens, the Chorus can convey terror in an authentic and credible manner. In the parodos (78-180) they envision the approaching army after the Scout's announcement. The horses are still far off, too distant to be heard, but the maidens can see the dust, the visual medium that transmits "its message . . . speechless, yet clear and true" (ἄναυδος σαφὴς ἔτυμος ἄγγελος, 82). Then, coming closer, it is mostly the acoustic elements, the imagined loud stamping of the hooves hitting the earth, that increases the terror, with the clash of the shields and the clatter of the spears. The sequence culminates in the synaesthetic expression "I see the noise" (κτύπον δέδορκα, 104) (Marinis 2012a; Trieschnigg 2016: 223). With their inner eyes, the girls still see the situation. They visualize the violence, supplementing the roaring sounds (Trieschnigg 2016: 220-30). This is what Greek theatre is about. By creating inner scenes of visual and audible scenarios, visualizing images and fantasizing about soundscapes, the actors or chorus members convey these impressions to the spectators so that they are united in terror. In anticipation of the mighty onslaught, overwhelmed by its acoustic and visual dynamic, still only sensed in their imagination, the maidens of the Chorus are terrified (cf., among other lines, θρεῦμαι φοβερὰ μεγάλ' ἄχη, 78; φόβῳ δ' οὐχ ὑπνώσσει κέαρ, 288),[14] and react by breaking out in loud wailing cries of sorrow (cf. αὔειν, λακάζειν, 186), in *goos* mixed with exaggerated invocations (*litai*) (ὀξυγόοις λιταῖσιν, 320). Fear often grows in anticipation or expectation of a future threat, and not only in response to a direct and present stimulus. In avoidance of the danger, they respond through flight and hectic motion (διαδρόμους φυγάς, 191), expressed in the dochmiac rhythms. Unsure if the gods will give shelter, and in total desperation, they fall in supplication at the feet of the statues of several polis gods, crouching and holding on to the images (98, 185). They thus ask the city gods if they do not also hear the noise of the approaching attackers (100). This situation is so drastic that the gods seem to have betrayed Thebes already (cf. πόλιν δορίπονον μὴ προδῶθ', 169). The supplication (cf. 110-11), the intense prostration, is the last resort, in view of threatening death or rape. They lament, couch, and kneel down as the sound of destruction comes closer, and in this ritual posture they appeal to the gods to hear them (171), and to help.

In his one-sided focus on successful military defence, Eteocles overreacts in a misogynistic way, calling the girls, as part of the female race, "in-

[14] On fear in *Sept.,* see Visvardi 2015: 147-78. Lomiento 2004 argues that the different colometric division of lines 78-150 as found in the manuscripts, avoiding metrical responsion, would emphasize the pathetic uproar.

tolerable things!" (θρέμματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά, 181), "objects of hate for reasonable men" (σωφρόνων μισήματα, 186). He believes that the maidens' loud shrieks (186) and panic-struck movements of flight work against his endeavour to close ranks, and that they will inject cowardice in the male army (191-2). To live together with a group inside the fortified city, showing this acoustic and kinetic behaviour is a great danger. In the typical *hybris*-reaction of Theban kings – we can compare Eteocles' dysphemic and misogynist attitude with that of Creon or Pentheus in *Antigone* or *Bacchae* – he threatens all men and women with death by stoning if they do not obey (196-9).[15] According to the dominant gender-role expectations and ideology, women should not interfere in male business outside the house (200-2). Therefore the king recommends that they follow the "rule of obedience" (πειθαρχία, 224) and keep silent (232). After all, he regards the women's reaction as a rebellion against him and the city, as well as against his male interpretation of polis-religion.

The king views the female lament, the *goos*, and the ritual movement of supplication as a threat to his male authority. In his *hybris* he despises ritual and religion, especially performed by women: only men can defend the city, divine support is only a weak metaphor and empty gesture, for in reality the gods leave the city after its fall (ἀλλ' οὖν θεοὺ / τοὺς τῆς ἁλούσης πόλεος ἐκλείπειν λόγος, 217-18). The maidens represent the traditional worldview that the power of gods stands above that of men. The conflict is not between different modes of prayer and ritual attitudes towards the gods, between euphemic *euchai* and dysphemic *litai*, that is, one positive, normative and civic, the other negative, marginal and threatening. Giordano-Zecharya (2006), believing Eteocles' claims, thus argues that the public and controlled prayer linked with sacrifice creates a reciprocal relation with the gods and through exhortation aims at instilling courage, whereas the invocation by the women, using lament and supplication, expresses emotion and increases fear. I believe instead that Eteocles' use of ritual tends to pervert the civic religion by subordinating the gods to the polis, whereas the ritual practice of the women not only undermines the civil discourse, but also affirms the ties of the polis with the cosmos, and strengthens the traditional religiosity that aims at genuine protection by the gods. Women enjoy a certain independence in ritual affairs. In the extreme situation of danger the reaction of the female Chorus is not only problematic, but also to some extent defendable and natural. They completely trust in the true polis gods to become their saviours and protectors. To reach safety and healing in crisis is a central religious concern, especially in mystery cult, but also of the Aeschylean chorus in general (Gru-

[15] On the excessive punishment, see Torrance 2007: 98.

ber 2009: 92-8, 513-21). Through their intense lament, supplicatory attitude, and direct approach to the statues, the maidens seem to have activated the gods. The close contact, so to speak, animates the statues that represent the gods. They protect their polis not as *symmachoi*, actual combatants, but as higher beings who entertain a special relation to the territory of Thebes where they possess shrines and temples. Through a metonymic link the crowning and dressing of the statues (101) makes them alive, and closes the defence line. To adorn an image with garlands is a cultic activity to honour the gods, but it also stands for strengthening the wall that encircles the city. Adorning statues with robes magically helps to protect the virgins' body from male assault.[16] The girls animate the statues though contact, rituals and practices so that the gods represented by the images protect their city, becoming thus *symmachoi* only in a metaphorical sense. Of course the gods do not enter the battle in a direct way, as Eteocles would like to force them to do. Moreover, Eteocles appeals to the wrong gods.

As personification of war, Ares (Torrance 2007: 40-2) fights on both sides, and thus against his own city of Thebes (45, 53, 64, 115 vs. 105, 135). The *goos* is the appropriate reaction to the situation. In accordance with the earth of Thebes, which, trampled by the warriors, feels the concussions, trembles, quakes, roars and wails (στένει πόλισμα γῆθεν ὡς κυκλουμένων, 247; 329-30; cf. 899-901), the Chorus shake their body, dance in uncontrolled and hectic motion, and lament in horrible tones. Eteocles thus maltreats Earth, one of the central divine figures of Thebes. In the same way, despite his protestations to keep to *euphemia* and appropriate diction, he offends the gods and the Chorus who act on their side. By speaking badly about the women he becomes a function of *Ara*, Curse, and the Curse herself thus acts in him. The girls' supplicatory mode – they call themselves a ἱκέσιον λόχον (111) –, their *hiketeia*, makes them arrive (from "to come", ἱκνέομαι) not to altars or statues of a foreign city, where they can seek for asylum from persecutors, but to statues (βρέτη, 95; cf. 98, 185) placed inside their own city at the wall. Aeschylus plays with the practice of supplication, setting elements apart, reverting and re-contextualizing them. They flee, not from the pursuer, but from the king and his authority himself. In normal practice the supplicants must leave the altars and images to beg the king for help (Gödde 2000: 27-8). In this case Eteocles begs them to leave the statues as well (ἐκτὸς οὖσ' ἀγαλμάτων, 265), but they will not appeal to their king to become their saviour. Rather, he begs them to be silent

[16] On the fear of rape in a captured city, also as fear of the fulfilment of marriage rites, see Torrance 2007: 93-4. On "hymenaial flight" in combination with (self-)lament and supplication, see Seaford 2012: 159; on the theme in the *Suppl.*, see Gödde 2000: 219-34.

and to remain quiet (232, 250, 262) (Torrance 2007: 101-16), and in the end they always interact with the gods to become their real saviours. Instead of welcoming them inside the city, Eteocles would like to exile this dangerous and rebellious population. Girls as *hiketides* are often seen to be suffering perverted marriage rites, with threats of rape and violence to their body (Gödde 2000: 218). In *Septem* the girls foresee and envisage their abduction and rape after the imminent capture of the city (327-35). Polis and female body thus notionally fuse with each other. In the *goos* the girls lament their possible loss of virginity, and they bewail the imminent attack of the assailants upon their intact body (327-35). The supplication thus functions to provide protection for the polis and the female body. The lament, the intense expression of shrieking, extra-linguistic sound (ἒ ἒ ἒ ἔ 150, 158; ἒ ἔ, 327, 339; Nooter 2017: 95), together with words anticipating the worst scenario, as well as the kinetics, the hectic movement to avoid it through the approach toward the statues, are very forceful means to reach their goal, much more than pure rhetorical persuasion. Ironically, it will turn out that not the king, the male *strategos*, saved them, but the gods, whose statues were animated by this intense action. The supplicants are not pursued by other men, but Eteocles by the Erinys (699-700, 723, 791, 867, 887, 977, 988) and the Curse (655, 766, 833, 894, 945, 954). Therefore in his horrible lust of fusing with his brother in violence (Sforza 2007: 97-104, 131-3), Eteocles must fall, whereas the polis survives with the support of the gods.

All things considered, the entire fierce debate between the king and the Chorus is a fight about the regimen of sound and movement in the polis, as later reflected by Plato in his *Laws* (Books 2 and 7).[17] Choral performativity in *euphemia* and disciplined movement can affirm the male order, whereas *dysphemia*, *goos* and distorted body-language can dissolve it. In Eteocles' opinion everything serves as cledonomantic signs. Therefore also the natural, psychologically comprehensible reactions become omens foreboding the military outcome. In this strangely magico-primitive reaction, he tends to denigrate usual ritual practice, the mix of *goos* and supplication. By falling down and touching the knees of a mighty person or statue in the gesture of supplication, people, under pressure of threatening death, make themselves as modest, small and helpless as possible in order to trigger the positive reaction of mercy and help from the powerful figure standing upright. In lamentation mourning people, especially women, emit shrill sounds, tear their dresses apart, scratch their cheeks and beat their breasts, assimilating themselves with the bemoaned dead (Arist. fr. 101 Rose at Ath. 675a; Seaford 1994: 86-7). Eteocles thus regards supplication and lamentation as signs and foreboding omens of a real decay and the dissolution of

[17] See the contributions in Peponi 2013.

order, according to *similia similibus* and homoeopathic logic. The Chorus' reaction of prayer is not purely anti-civic, but is also performed according to the official voice that represents the community. It thus makes the audience aware of the fact that Eteocles disdains popular religion as well as traditional piety, and the practices of his people. Ironically, the king who sees in everything a deeper meaning fails to recognise the deepest truth of the gods, thus causing his own tragic downfall. Therefore he orders that the girls should either be silent or, once they have heard his prayers (κἀμῶν ἀκούσασ' εὐγμάτων, 267), that they should at least intone the *ololygmos*, "the victory song, the sacred cry of joy and goodwill, our Greek ritual of shouting in tribute, that brings courage to our friends and dissolves fear of the enemy" (ὀλολυγμὸν ἱερὸν εὐμενῆ παιώνισον, / Ἑλληνικὸν νόμισμα θυστάδος βοῆς, / θάρσος φίλοις, λύουσα πολεμίων φόβον, 267-70). Ironically, "[t]he *ololygmos* clearly is not only a nicely sounding cry of celebration and victory, but also the shrill cry of women who, in a crisis situation, performatively drown out the moment of danger".[18] "Especially just before the ritual slaughter of the sacrificial animal, an act normally accompanied by a chorus, such a cry" (θυστάδος βοῆς, 269) "emerges from the women in attendance" (Bierl 2017a: 170-1).[19] Tragedy tends to express the horrible deed with sacrificial metaphors. For example, Clytemnestra introduces her murders with this cry (Aesch. *Ag.* 587, 595; Bierl 2017a: 180). With the *ololygmos* the women could therefore anticipate the result of the tragic death of the brothers as sacrifice for the polis (Zeitlin 1982/2009: 161-8/115-19). This connotation is emphasized by the fact that Eteocles "vow[s] that, if things go well and the city is saved, the citizens shall redden the gods' altars with the blood of sheep and sacrifice bulls to the gods" (εὖ ξυντυχόντων καὶ πόλεως σεσωμένης / μήλοισιν αἱμάσσοντας ἑστίας θεῶν / ταυροκτονοῦντας θεοῖσιν ὧδ' ἐπεύχομαι, 274-6). The blood of sacrificial animals will turn into the blood of human beings that will soak the earth of Thebes.

Despite all promises given to the ruler to remain silent, the maidens cannot but lament in fear and panic during the first stasimon. Thus the Chorus introduces the song with the words (288-94):

μέλει, φόβῳ δ' οὐχ ὑπνώσσει κέαρ,
γείτονες δὲ καρδίας

[18] See Deubner 1941: 14 (the discharge of fearful tension); Burkert 1985: 74 (moment of crisis and decision). See also Gödde 2011: 98-116 ("fear of danger" and "joy over the happy outcomes that . . . should be virtually evoked during the simultaneous 'discharge' of feelings of fear") (100). For its nearness to a cry of lament, "howling", see Connelly 2014: 267.

[19] See Burkert 1983: 5, 12, 54 (on *ololyge*) and Burkert 1985: 72, 74.

μέριμναι ζωπυροῦσι τάρβος 290
τὸν ἀμφιτειχῆ ʼς λεών, δράκοντας ὥς τις τέκνων
ὑπερδέδοικεν λεχαίων δυσευνήτορας
πάντρομος πελειάς·

[I heed him, but through terror my heart finds no repose. Anxieties border upon my heart and kindle my fear of the army surrounding our walls, as a trembling dove fears for her children in the nest because of snakes that are dangerous bedfellows.]

In terror the girls foresee their capture and the lament of the entire polis (327-32):

ἒ ἕ, νέας τε καὶ παλαιὰς
ἱππηδὸν πλοκάμων, περιρ-
ρηγνυμένων φαρέων· βοᾷ
δ᾽ ἐκκενουμένα πόλις 330
λαΐδος ὀλλυμένας μειξοθρόου.
βαρείας τοι τύχας προταρβῶ.

[And grief, too, to let the women be led away captive – ah me! – young and old, dragged by the hair, like horses, with their cloaks torn off them. A city, emptied, shouts out as the human booty perishes with mingled cries. A heavy fate, indeed, my fear anticipates.]

As noted above, the Chorus visualize their abduction with their inner eyes. The enemies will drag the women away. In their anticipatory fear, the violence is acted out on their nude bodies, as they envision being raped. The city bemoans the brutal scene in a fusion of cries, that the girls also utter in great excitement, with the short emission of pure and shrill ἒ ἕ sounds. It becomes clear that the maidens are the inner affective focus, conveying the necessary *pathos*, *eleos*. and *phobos*. The female body and the city are assimilated and fused in images.

The description reflects the actual movement in the *goos*, where the wailing girls also dishevel their hair, tear off their dresses and beat their breasts. They compare themselves with animals; the pigeons (294) and horses (cf. 328) recall the animal metaphors in the famous Partheneion of Alcman (fr. 1 Davies). The pure violence visualized by the inner eyes, the drastic assault on the body and the territory of Thebes, mimetically produced together with dance and cries somehow works also as a negative foil, a scenario that the gods should not allow to come true. The words thus function like an appeal in the "rhetoric of supplication" (Gödde 2000: 177-214) to make the gods protect the city.

To sum up, the spectators view a conflict over two attitudes towards the gods and polis religion. It is a struggle between a male authoritarian king

propagating the sophistic 5th-century pure "will to power", which pragmatically ranks the city over the gods, and the female Chorus representing the people who act in harmony with the cosmos and the gods. As a ritual group the Chorus adhere to traditional religion and popular piety. Of course, as a female character, due to their extreme fear and distress, they perform typically female rites and practices. In dancing and singing the *goos*, in lamenting and intimately clinging to the statues that surround the inner space of Thebes, they make the gods come alive, to actively help defend the walls and save the city.

The Central Shield Scene (369-652) as a *mise en abyme*

After the first stasimon the Scout comes again, reporting now in detail about the allotment of the seven heroes equipped with their especially adorned shields. In the extensive scene of the ecphrastic accumulation of visual signs in seven speeches (369-652) nothing really happens in the sense of a dramatic plot. Thus it is essential to evaluate it in terms of pre-dramatic poetics (Bierl 2010). The scene is central, and carries meaning at a different level. Scholars tend to read it from a hermeneutic, semiotic and structuralist perspective, to elucidate Eteocles' interpretations of the symbols on the emblems of the shields, the symbolic meanings per se, and how they can be located between the self and the Other (Torrance 2007: 68).[20] I will combine these methods, and add the ritual and performative aspect. In a chain based on the principles of combination and variation, each attacker is presented with his shield as a carrier of meaning, whereas Eteocles places a hero against each one with a specific message to counteract and neutralize the magic power that he attributes to each emblem in his cledonomantic logic. I argue that the seven speeches and answers function as an agonistic duel about symbols, and thus as the theatrical substitute of actual violence that cannot be shown on stage. Eteocles interprets the signs, now especially visual signs, as blazons. In some cases textual inscriptions (433, 647-8) are added that through the actor's speech become also utterances, again as a code that hints at a higher meaning. In this case, the signs with their symbolic and semiotic potential are not viewed at random in their arbitrary character, but both parties, attributing to them an intentional meaning, apply them on purpose to influence the outcome. The ecphrastic speeches presenting the heroes and their shields embellished with a plethora of signs also serve as a performative means to foresee and antic-

[20] On the shield scene see Thalmann 1978: 105-35; Vidal-Naquet 1990; Zeitlin 1982/2009; Steiner 1994: 49-60; Torrance 2007: 68-91.

ipate the outcome, the *telos*, of the trilogy. Moreover, they present frames of interpretation for the audience. They are thus templates of hubristic behaviour, and Eteocles can again divine their deeper meaning. Whereas shields normally had only apotropaic ornaments or letters for identification (Berman 2007: 33-86; Torrance 2007: 68-70), here we encounter a magic-symbolic surplus, a means to convey the duel-combat on a metaphorical level. In the series, the allotted person attacks, and Eteocles reacts by choosing or having chosen already before the opponent, capping, reverting and counteracting the semiotic potential, to enact defence. It is again Eteocles who tries to control *hybris* and bad, foreboding signs, as well as to set his view against it. In the "neo-epic", almost "anti-epic" tragedy (Nagy 2000: 116), he acts as a *mantis* reading and interpreting signs, but in contrast to Calchas he ultimately fails (Nagy 2000).

Froma Zeitlin (1982/2009) has emphasised that the shield scene is meta-theatrical and works like a 'play within the play'. In a very schematic and basic manner it deals with the quintessential ingredients of theatre, two actors presenting radically opposing positions, here styled as a fight for life, with a chorus who add their emotional comment to the proto-dialogue. As in a model-play – setting up Melanippus as first opponent, Eteocles rightly says that "Ares will decide the outcome with a throw of the dice" (ἔργον δ' ἐν κύβοις Ἄρης κρινεῖ, 414) – it is a self-referential scene about what theatre is all about, i.e. reading signs and interpreting mimetic acting. It is about *semata* that convey fear, *phobos*, and about how a spectator becomes himself an actor in a cruel constellation. The emblem-scene also focuses on the particularly Theban and Dionysian nucleus, the logic of autochthony and regressive circularity. And it mirrors the situation that has been exposed up to this point, splitting it up in single pairs of enemies: the attack of the Seven and their Argive army against Thebes. It is a fight dominated by ambivalence and difference that collapses distinctions in mutual death. The scene revolves around a force that turns against itself, assuming primordial features. It reflects the Theban myth of the Spartoi as well, the men stemming from the primordial dragon sacred to Ares. This monster was killed by Cadmus and its teeth were sown into the earth from where men sprang up fighting against each other. Eteocles, allotting Spartoi against the Seven, to some extent resembles Cadmus who attempts to trick these Sown Men by making them turn against each other. At the same time, he is both a spectator and a player, having reserved the seventh position for himself (282-4). In the course of the events we see not only single scenes, but ones that we can combine to form a syntactic narrative, a story *in nuce* (Zeitlin 1982/2009: 171-218/123-52; Torrance 2007: 83-8) that mirrors the main situation, reflecting again numerous other constellations. The first three blazons describe the evolution from cosmic origin to a

naked man, who aims at burning down the city, up to a warrior who climbs over the fortification. The fourth pair consists in Hippomedon carrying Typhon as emblem and Hyperbius, who is the only Theban warrior who receives his own opposing blazon representing Zeus. Thus the war finds its model in the primordial fight between Typhon and Zeus. The next three assailants carry signs of a more complex development of mankind on their shields. The scene culminates in the last pair: Eteocles, who is trapped from the very beginning, from his first move in this model-play, must face his brother Polynices.

Moreover, I argue, following Walter Burkert (1981; 1992: 106-14), that the mythic tradition of the Seven found in the epic called *Thebais* can be linked to a Babylonian healing and purification ritual, described in a series of magical texts, the *Bit meseri*, enacted to drive out evil.[21] Apparently Aeschylus used this underlying concept of catharsis, integrating it into and transposing it to the tragedy about the same mythic background, *Seven Against Thebes.* According to Burkert the myth of the Seven does not reflect a historical event, that is, a war fought at a historically testified fortification of seven gates. Rather, seven is a sacred number that often figures in rituals and mythical narrations. The texts describe how Babylonian priests or magicians cured diseases by setting up figurines of seven attacking demons "with formidable wings", and against these, figurines of seven protective gods. Thus brothers-in-effigy fight against each other in a metaphorical battle between evil and good forces. In particular, a pair of twins made of plaster was set up at the head of the person to be cured, on the left and right. At the end of the ceremony the figures were destroyed. The meaning of this model-play is to work through violence on a symbolic level, and to exorcise the evil spirits. Transposed to tragedy, I venture to suggest that in the mutual and total self-annihilation of the brothers Eteocles and Polynices, a catharsis is established that will be used for the cohesion and the survival of the city as a whole. In the Dionysian logic, the house of the king has to be eliminated so that the polis can live, gaining cohesion from the cathartic act of violence.[22]

As previously stated, a battle cannot be shown on the classical Greek stage, but is normally brought before the onlookers' eyes through the narration of a messenger. Aeschylus, in this case, anticipates the violence of the actual combat, culminating in the very dramatic point when Eteocles,

[21] See the approving discussion by West 1997: 456-7. Some critics mentioned Burkert's theory: Cingano 2002: 30 (with a list of objections against it ibid. n12; esp. Vermeule 1987: 149n26); Catenacci 2004: 173; Torrance 2007: 58; Sforza 2007: 97-9. None of them, to my knowledge, has systematically applied it to explain the ritual function of *Septem.*

[22] Seaford (2012: 158-77) uses a similar approach.

the king, who prefers the polis over family and religion, decides to oppose his brother Polynices at the seventh gate (632-52 and consequences 653-860). The violence is conveyed via the ecphrasis and interpretation of blazons, i.e. signs on shields that have borne a potential for meta-poetic self-referentiality since the famous description of the Shield in *Iliad* 18.478-608.[23] Thus, seen in the cultural perspective of the Mesopotamian healing ritual, the central scene of the shields is not only meta-theatrical in the various senses explained above, but it is also self-referential in its mythic-ritual and performative meaning as well as in its intended cathartic effect. It can be read as a *mise en abyme*, "a text-within-text that functions as microcosm or mirror of the text itself" (Martin 2000: 63)[24] and a miniature *mise en scène* (cf. Zeitlin 1982/2009: 177-90/129-36) of the entire play about mutual destruction and the resulting salvation of the polis, incorporating also diachronic developments and going back to a possible non-Greek ritual background. The Mesopotamian healing ritual is in itself already a very schematic model-play working with substitute figurines of clay, but it is transferred to a much more complicated myth in the Greek context. It has a parallel in the Akkadian epic about Erra, the god of war and plague, who leads a group of seven terrifying champions threatening to destroy mankind. This text could also be used in magic incantation rituals to exorcise evil (Burkert 1992: 109-10). Aeschylus then transposes the ritual-myth complex to a drama. In its middle he sets a theatrical mirror-scene in narration and in dialogic capping, where the signs are envisaged in the spectators' inner eyes. The audience is thus exposed to this ritual-mythic mini-epos as *mimesis*. Through the *mise en abyme*, I argue, Aeschylus can convey the meaning of the play on the ritual, emotional and cognitive level. The spectators are not only engaged in the hermeneutical process to decipher signs and their semiotics, but also in the ritual and performative process that communicates the *pathos* and the cathartic meaning of the entire play.

Let us take a glance at this agonistic strife through signs in more detail. Tydeus (375-96), the first formidable attacker, is described as a dreadful acoustic and visual phenomenon. He cries in a frenzy of war, and bells attached to his shield emit the sound of fear, the emotion conveyed by the integrated voice of the people, the chorus. On the blazon of his shield he bears the symbols of stars and of the moon, the eye of night. This warfare with signs does not impress Eteocles, the apparently rational military lead-

[23] Coray 2016: 187-266, esp. 198-200.

[24] Dällenbach (1989: 43) defines a *mise en abyme* as "any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative in simple, repeated, or 'specious' (or paradoxical) duplication". Catenacci (2004: 168-9) recognizes a *mise en abyme* in the single blazons relating to the warriors.

er: "I would not tremble before any mere ornaments on a man. Nor can signs and symbols wound and kill" (κόσμον μὲν ἀνδρὸς οὔτιν' ἂν τρέσαιμ' ἐγώ, / οὐδ' ἑλκοποιὰ γίγνεται τὰ σήματα, 397-8). As a mantic diviner who knows about the cledonomantic potential of signs he inverts the symbolic intention, reading it as threatening death for the bearer: "For should night fall on this man's eyes as he dies, then to its bearer this arrogant symbol would prove rightly and justly named" (404-5). He thus counteracts the war of signs with apparent rationality, opposing a different, hidden meaning. Looking at Capaneus' emblem, we proceed in a climax from night to a naked man bearing fire (422-36) that will be opposed by the fire-bearing thunderbolt of Zeus (437-51); Eteoclus (457-71), a variation on the name Eteocles (showing the mutual interdependence of the antagonists), bears the sign of a man climbing a ladder. Eteocles sets up the autochthon Megareus (472-80) to make him fall down as well as the tower. The gigantic Typhon on Hippomedon's blazon (486-500) – the "terrible, outrageous and lawless" (Hes. *Th.* 307) chthonic monster who, according to Hesiod (*Th.* 306-37) challenged Zeus' rule of order – will be reverted by the only counter-image of Hyperbius' shield on the Theban side: Zeus himself, who defeated the Typhon in a cataclysmic battle, and cast it down to Tartarus (501-20). This "antithetical grouping," similar to the central image on the pediment of a temple (Vidal-Naquet 1990: 289 and fig. 8 on 287), functions as another *mise en abyme*, locating the quintessential conflict at the centre of the seven episodes. In the Akkadian model of incantation songs, the evil spirits are winds, snakes and dragons, rising from chthonic realms, just like Typhon. Marduk, the highest god, stands against them and prevails in the end (Burkert 1992: 110). The Sphinx, the horrible symbol of Thebes' primordial past outdone and killed by Oedipus, again in an intellectual play about riddling signs that signify human existence, comes back into Thebes via Parthenopaius (526-49). Actor will be placed against him. He should be successful, since Sphinx is the anti-cultural symbol overcome already once (550-62). Amphiaraus, himself a seer, then functions as the embedded counterforce as good and just enemy opposing the bad intentions of his own group, the only attacker without hubristic signs (568-96). Corrupted by Polynices, Eriphyle – Adrastus' sister and Amphiaraus' wife – forces him to take part in the raid against his own better judgment. In the end he will be mystically received in the earth and venerated as a hero in a healing cult. Thus he is linked to the main functions of the episode and entire play, the mantic interpretation of signs, *sema* as sign and tomb, and catharsis through violence. Good and evil are on either side in a mutual self-destruction that creates purification for the surviving city. Eteocles therefore praises this just man. Despite this inversion, he is obliged to set up Lasthenes against Amphiaraus (597-625).

The scene culminates in the last and seventh pair of the brothers (631-52 vs. 653-76). With this pair, however, the situation suddenly changes. Whereas up to this point the military commander only announced how the six single attackers including their signs will be met in the future, now he himself is directly concerned (Del Corno 1998: esp. 41-3). The Scout only describes the hero at the seventh gate: it is Polynices. He "holds a shield, a perfect circle, newly-made, with a double symbol cleverly fastened on it: a woman modestly walking in the fore leads a man in arms made, it appears, of hammered gold. She claims to be Justice, as the lettering indicates, 'I will bring this man back and he will have his city and move freely in his father's halls'" (642-8). After this announcement the pattern of presenting a counter-measure remains, but the situation is totally different. We shift directly from narration to drama, from the unseen to the visible, from absence to the presence of a performance in the here and now, from the abstract future to the present. All of a sudden, the focus is on the king himself, who as son of Oedipus is totally determined to fight, and prepares himself to be armed. In the abstract struggle about signs the battle was still far away, but now it is imminent. And it will concern the royal family itself. To mark the break, the shield scene comes to an abrupt end with the description of Polynices' emblem. The Scout departs, but the old pattern of giving a direct reaction is maintained. Thus the scene glides into the next one (653-719), the *peripeteia*, in which Eteocles is seen preparing to meet his brother in the decisive duel. The Chorus abruptly change from a reactive to an active attitude, attempting to hold Eteocles' back.

The Third Part (653-1005): Fratricide or *Goos* Comes Full Circle

According to Eteocles (653-76), who notoriously respects the cledonomantic aspect of any word and utterance, names bear the true sense of their etymology; thus with a fitting name Polynices means "much conflict and quarrel" (658). He was never just, and thus appropriating Dike is simply *hybris*. Eteocles trusts in his conviction that the attackers are unjust, and sets himself up as opponent, but without any counteracting force, saying: "we shall know soon enough what the symbol on his shield will accomplish, whether the babbling letters shaped in gold on his shield, together with his mind's wanderings, will bring him back" (658-61). If Dike were with him, she would bear the "false name" (670). Therefore he needs no symbol on his shield either. Polynices will be literally brought back as corpse, yet Eteocles does not emphasize this hidden meaning any more. The *mantis* of signs abruptly transforms into a Homeric hero, totally fixated on battle to reach undying fame. Thus the trap materializes.

The Chorus desperately attempt to stop him, yet in vain (677-719). It is Eteocles' desire – *eros* (688), as the maidens of the Chorus analyse (686-8) – the lust for fusion in the typical brother constellation (Sforza 2007: 101) that will lead to his own death in the mutual blow of *miasma* (682), as well as to the destruction of the household and *genos*. On the one side, the curse of Oedipus, the *daemon*, drives things to the fatal end, but also Eteocles' own psychic constitution, his absolute ambition to rule as king, to fight even against his own brother without listening to any attempt at mediation. Trusting in the true sense of his name, he truly will achieve his glory (*Eteo-kles*; cf. 830). The *kleos aphthiton*, imperishable glory, is characteristic of any epic hero as he reaches this goal only in his death, falling in the epic duel (Nagy 2013: 31-2). Thus to make his name true he must die in battle, in the mutual blow, together with his brother. Therefore he seeks *eukleia* in death through all means (684-5), and the Chorus call both brothers in their total fusion <κλεινοί τ' ἐτεὸν> καὶ πολυνεικεῖς ("⟨really famous⟩ and much of strife", 830), since they combine their true signifiers, the lust for glory, quarrel and mutual death.

In the second stasimon (720-91), the Chorus, full of horror, draw once more the line of the trilogy from Laius to Oedipus and his sons, all driven by the same *eros* and frenzy. Now the girls legitimately fear that Erinys will fulfil the curse. Immediately afterwards the Scout reports the successful battle for the city but the catastrophic end of the brothers (792-821). Fear, terror and *goos* are still the Chorus' dominant ways of expression. They were right, and their activation of the polis gods to act as saviours of the community was successful. In clear reference to Eteocles' wrong and misguided attitude towards the gods, and with slight irony, they ask if they should rejoice, and intone now their song of victory, the *ololygmos* (πότερον χαίρω κἀπολολύξω, 825), as Eteocles had summoned them to do before (267). In light of the survival of the city, the cry could signify the victory, but looking at the extinction of the royal family the *ololygmos* turns out to be the wailing cry that accompanies and overshadows the tragic 'sacrifice' of the brothers.[25]

Dionysus and Palintropic Harmony

Eteocles could not silence the maidens completely in their fitting tonality of *goos*, and ironically they lament now in Dionysiac frenzy (as θυιάς, 836) about him as well as his brother. In this tragedy of total violence and destruction Dionysus, the god of tragedy, is the hidden player behind the

[25] See above nn18-19.

events (Marinis 2012b). Despite his Theban origin he was not addressed among the polis gods. Yet the god of the Other works as the active engine in the entire trilogy. His status as the paradoxical collapse of distinctions between categories and oppositions is perfectly suited to Thebes' characteristics as place of the Other, and of regressive circularity (Bierl 2017b: 102-6). The ecstatic force of madness always comes from the outside, while the inside refuses to accept his arrival. In the end the eruptive energy destroys the royal house that firmly opposed Dionysus. Yet the release of violence and mutual murder are also positive for the cohesion of the community (Seaford 1994: 235-75, 344-67; 2012: 75-113, 158-77). Previously, the assailants were associated with the Dionysian, but now the women inside the walls feel like maenads in their excessive lament. The Other is incorporated into the city, and as in the Babylonian healing ritual, where figurines of gypsum are destroyed, the mutual death of the twin-like brothers, whose opposed identities collapse and fuse in a blood-sacrifice for the Theban soil, has a cathartic quality for the polis. In their death they exorcise the evil spirits of Erinys and Curse, and guarantee the survival of the city. Eteocles had tried to silence the people and the women, the Other, already inside (238, 250, 262), but they prevailed. As inner emotional voice the Chorus display and convey the Dionysian *pathos*, thus assuming the metaphor of maenads who in ritual are temporarily set free to celebrate orgies outside, whereas in myth they are often associated with murder and death. In the face of the catastrophe, horror has seized them completely (esp. 720-91).

In the fierce struggle for the right tune and body-regimen Eteocles was proven wrong. Eteocles, so much concerned with the foreboding dimension of language and signs, did not pay attention to Apollo's open oracle, to the power of the curse and to the omen in their names. Thus the Chorus rightly state: "Indeed, in exact accordance with their name and as truly famous and 'men of much strife', they have perished through their impious intent" (829-31). Both brothers acted against the gods, whereas the Chorus acted in accordance with them. The girls' religious orthopraxy helped animate the statues and activate the gods. Through their voice and tune they have been the gods' agents inside the walls, to help the polis survive. Indeed, their rebellious behaviour could have been a warning for the king to change. As hidden Dionysian agents of *goos*, however, they already anticipated the terrible outcome. Now their maenadic quality becomes open. In a self-referential manner the maidens use musical terms to call the brothers' fall a δύσορνις ἅδε ξυναυλία δορός (839) (this song of the spear, sung to the flute, indeed born of an ill omen). The phrasing emblematizes the palintropic circularity of fatal entanglements in Thebes and its ruling family. The ξυναυλία is like a *palintropos harmonia*, a harmony turned backward or a backstretched connection (Heraclitus fr. DK [22 B] 51). The *au-*

los, the flute, is a specifically Dionysian instrument (Schlesier 1982; Bierl 1991: 83 with n121). Music and weapon are paradoxically brought together in a discordant harmony. The *syn*-sounding accord of clashing spears as ecstatic flutes is *dysornis*, with an inharmonious quality of a bird-song that means ill omen, since it is a wild *goos* and a "*melos* for the tomb" (835) sung in frenzy, accompanied by ecstatic flutes and fitting for the mad deed. It recalls Heraclitus' συνᾷδον διᾷδον ("what harmoniously sings together and discordantly sings asunder") in fr. 10 DK. It is the horrible dialectics of the circular and ecstatic entanglement in the house of the Labdacids that finds expression generation after generation. And it mirrors the terrible collapse of the self and the Other typical of Thebes, the tragic locality par excellence (Zeitlin 1986).

Myths about incest and fights among brothers and relatives reflect the lack of cultural differentiation, the ongoing tendency of regressive circularity in an excessive understanding of autochthony. With regard to the fatal catastrophe, for the Chorus "it is right, before their singing, to cry out the awful hymn of the Erinys (τὸν δυσκέλαδόν θ' ὕμνον Ἐρινύος) and thereafter sing the hated victory song of Hades (ἀχεῖν Ἀίδα τ' / ἐχθρὸν παιᾶν' ἐπιμέλπειν)" (866-70).[26] In their characteristic manner the Chorus project the quintessentially Dionysian constellation of song and dance: to give honour to Dionysus with festive *choreia* in tragedy, especially located in Thebes, turns into a perverted song of lament about death, revenge, curse and violence. The Chorus reflect again the Dionysian conflation of harmonious melody and its wailing distortion by summarizing the situation in Thebes as follows: "Curses have cried out their piercing mode of *nomos*" (ἐπηλάλαξαν / Ἀραὶ τὸν ὀξὺν νόμον, 952-3). In emphasizing palintropic conditions, where opposites stand closely and paradoxically together, Aeschylus resembles Heraclitus. It is less the total fusion of opposites than the close connection that makes them oscillate between the different states, turning (*tropan*) and changing again and again (*palin*) from one into the other in metabolic forms. Therefore Eteocles already announces that he will "set up the big turning point (τὸν μέγαν τρόπον) as himself against the enemies with the other six counter-rowers" (ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἄνδρας ἓξ ἐμοὶ σὺν ἑβδόμῳ / ἀντηρέτας ἐχθροῖσι τὸν μέγαν τρόπον / . . . τάξω, 282-4).[27] This notion of a turn is addressed by the Chorus in similar words:

[26] Lines 861-74 are usually regarded as inauthentic, a later interpolation fitting to 1005-78. See Hutchinson 1985: 190-1; some critics, cited in Lupas and Petre 1981: 263, defend it. The self-reference to a paradoxical musicality is typical of Aeschylus; see e.g. πρέπει λέγειν παιῶνα τόνδ' Ἐρινύων, *Ag.* 645 and Bierl 2017a: 181-2.

[27] Most critics understand τὸν μέγαν τρόπον (283) as an adverbial accusative "in great manner", "in proud fashion" (Smyth); in the sense of "one to one" (Rose); Page puts a "non intelligitur"; Hutchinson 1985: 89 *ad loc.* "[it] can hardly qualify either

ἐπεὶ δαίμων / λήματος ἂν τροπαίᾳ χρονίᾳ μεταλ-/λακτὸς ἴσως ἂν ἔλθοι θελεμωτέρῳ / πνεύματι ("for the divine spirit may change its purpose even after a long time and come on a gentler wind", 705-8; see παντρόπῳ φυγᾷ . . . τροπαῖον). Tragedy loves to speak about suffering in its own musical terms. Thus the closeness of death, lament and celebratory ecstasy in terms of song and sound resembles the paradoxical identity of Hades and Dionysus as stated by Heraclitus (ωὑτὸς δὲ Ἀίδης καὶ Διόνυσος, fr. 15 DK).[28] The form of the semi-choral *threnos* (875-960) mirrors again the contents, the circularity, the contradictory sameness in palintropic harmony of mutual self-annihilation and reciprocal violence. This is underlined by the antiphonic reply to catchwords in double forms (like μέλεοι . . . / μέλεοι . . . μελέους, 878-80; στόνος, / στένουσι . . . στένει, 900-1), further parallel forms (like τετυμμένοι / τετυμμένοι, 889-90; ἰὼ ἰὼ, 875, 881; αἰαῖ / αἰαῖ, 893-4; δι' ὧν / δι' ὧν 904-5; σιδηρόπληκτοι . . . / σιδηρόπληκτοι, 911-12), paradoxical expressions (in dual διήλλαχθε σὺν σιδάρῳ, 883-4, ⟨κοὐ⟩ διχόφρονι πότμῳ, 899, expressions with αὐτο- like αὐτόστονος αὐτοπήμων, 917, with ἀλλαλο- and and ὁμο- like ἀλλαλοφόνοις / χερσὶν ὁμοσπόροισιν, 931-2). Finally it culminates in an amoibaic semi-choric song of *threnos* (961-1004). In a stichic and hemistichic exchange parallel short units are given in direct juxtaposition and in symmetry of rhyme and meter. The Chorus, divided in two halves, sing for example (961-5):

– παιθεὶς ἔπαισας. – σὺ δ' ἔθανες κατακτανών.
– δορὶ δ' ἔκανες. – δορὶ δ' ἔθανες.
– μελεοπόνος. μελεοπαθὴς.
– πρόκεισαι. – κατέκτας.
– ἴτω γόος. – ἴτω δάκρυα. 965

[– You were struck as you struck. – You died as you killed.
– With a spear you killed – With a spear you died.
– Wretched in your deed. – Wretched in your suffering.
– You lie there. – You killed.
– Let lament flow! – Let tears flow!]

And later (993):

ὀλοὰ λέγειν. ὀλοὰ δ' ὁρᾶν.

[Destroyed to say. – Destroyed to see.]

This mirroring form of elements presented in close parallelism highlights

ἀντερήτας or τάξω." Therefore he suggests a lost line.

[28] Seaford (2012: 240-57) speaks about the "unity of opposites" and tries to explain the similarity between Heraclitus and Aeschylus on the basis of money and economics.

the paradoxical and palintropic harmony even more.[29] The performance of speech and song acts establishes, enacts and affirms the perverse mutual murder. The perlocutionary act is the total fusion of Eteocles and Polynices, both royal leaders, brothers and enemies (cf. 674-5) lying in their blood, who killed each other. And it increases the horror the audience feel about this deed. Tragedy displays *pathos* on an audible and visual level. Words, voices and purely extra-linguistic cries (see the numerous ἰὼ ἰὼ in the end, 994-1004) support what one sees, bodies in blood. The reaction is song and dance in *goos*, lament that flows like the tears that accompany it.

In contrast to the solution in harmony of the *Oresteia*, the trilogy about the Labdacids ends in the total dissolution of the royal *genos* through the mutual destruction of the brothers. The excessive violence to which the audience is exposed in *Septem* functions as catharsis, one of the main effects of tragedy according to Aristotle (*Po.* 1449b24-8; Ugolini 2016: 3-16; Ford 2016), making the survival of the city possible. This idea of tragic poets as political teachers of the people and as saviours of the city is particularly reflected in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1009-10, 1054-6 and 1419, 1436, 1501, 1530; see Bierl 1991: 42). We see now again how the central description of the shields and their signs mirrors the entire play of the *Seven* and its tragic meaning. The scenes describing warriors bearing their shields with blazons and the counteracting practices, together with the emotional comments of the Chorus, revolve around the ritual meaning of self-annihilation in mutual, heroic death-by-duel. It culminates in the fratricide at the seventh gate, sacred to Apollo, whose oracles were not obeyed in the family of Laius. The Chorus convey the necessary *pathos*, the affective side, in view of the very abstract and hermeneutic negotiation of signs. The maidens are full of fear; they break out in lament, partially anticipating the brothers' deaths and the dissolution of order. At the climax they try to prevent Eteocles from his deed. But it is in vain, since he is driven by *eros* (686), *himeros* (692), a desire for fusion with his complementary other side in self-destruction. In tragedy performed in honour of Dionysus this drive is typically styled as a Dionysian *mania*. Thus we can find a net of Dionysian allusions and metaphors in *Septem* (Marinis 2012b). Very indicative is the fact that Erinys comes with the adjective *melanaigis* (699-700).[30] It is an epithet of Dionysus. The Suda reports that the daughters of Eleuther, the eponymous hero of Eleutherae, mocked the epiphany of Dionysus in a black goatskin and went mad. They could only be cured by introducing the cult of Dionysus Melanaigis. Eleutherae, located on the border between Boeotia and Attica is

[29] In a slightly different perspective, see also Seaford 2012: 225-39, esp. 227-30.

[30] See in a similar vein also Seaford 2012: 161-2. Against the Dionysian association are Hutchinson 1985: 157 and Centanni 1994.

the place from where the statue was brought by ephebes in an annual procession at the start of the City Dionysia, into the god's precinct close to the Theatre of Dionysus, where *Septem* was also performed. Sometimes the story of the ruse, *apate*, explaining the name of the Apatouria in an *aition*, is linked to Dionysus Melanaigis. Melanthus, the king of Athens, fought a duel with Xanthus, the king of the Boeotians over a territorial dispute. Melanthus called out that his opponent showed unfair behaviour since he brought a second fighter standing behind him. Sometimes he is associated with a phantom in black goatskin. By this ruse Melanthus made Xanthus turn around so that he could strike him in that moment.[31] The duel of kings of complementary and general name, Black and White, reminds one to some extent of the Theban brothers. Eteocles receives putative help from Dionysus. The god drives him to the terrible duel, but in this case both combatants must die, a cruel sacrifice for the god. Melanaigis makes the girls of Eleuther as well as Eteocles mad. It is a maenadic behaviour of frenzy that the Erinys, often associated with a maenad (Aesch. *Eum.* 500), transfers to the king. The daughters of Eleuther became mad and set "free". The girls of the Chorus are in Eteocles' eyes mad too, at least rebellious. That is what the first part of the play was about. In their sensitivity the girls regard the Argive attack as a Bacchic noise (84, 213) that drives even the cosmos to frenzy (αἰθὴρ ἐπιμαίνεται, 155). According to them Ares is *mainomenos*, mad (343), polluting piety (344). *Goos* consists of wild and ecstatic utterance and movement. Eteocles even calls it "this panicked flight in rushed movements here and there" (διαδρόμους φυγάς, 191),[32] as if they like maenads would be eager to move outside of the city to Polynices, but they are mainly focused on the inside as they must stay in the city. When they know about the catastrophe they call themselves θυιάς (836), as they sing their song to the grave in lament (835-8).[33] In the typical way of Theban kings and comparable to Pentheus, Eteocles wants to control the women and keep them in their subordinate role inside the house. However, he is impelled by the irrational *mania* that he desperately tries to suppress, by the Erinys and the Curse. Finally the women try to convince him to obey women (πιθοῦ γυναιξί, 712) who wish to hold him back for religious and cultic reasons. The deed equals a *miasma*, ritual pollution (682). Yet, totally fixed on his principle of πειθαρχία (224), on rule based on discipline and obedience, he cannot give in. In his endeavour to control the women he does

[31] On the sources (esp. Suda, *s.v.* μέλαν and Ἀπατούρια, *schol. ad* Aristoph. *Ach.* 146), see Halliday 1926.

[32] See also 280, with reference to Hesych. ποίφυγμα· σχῆμα ὀρχηστικόν, but some link it to sort of cry.

[33] See also: μαίνεται γόοισι φρήν, 967 ("My heart is mad with wailing").

not realize that he is already driven by the irrational forces in the first part of the play. Pursued by the Curse he constantly curses the women and the gods. Inside the city the Scout and Eteocles, but even the Chorus characterise the assailants from the outside as the Other,[34] primordial, impious and irrational forces with Dionysian potential. Tydeus' soundscape in attack, βρέμει (378, see 476), is reminiscent of *Bromios*. Hippomedon is full of a god in *enthousiasmos*, not Dionysus but Ares (ἔνθεος δ' Ἄρει, 497) and "raves for battle like a maenad" (βακχᾷ πρὸς ἀλκὴν θυιάς ὥς, 498).[35] The Sphinx on Parthenopaius' blazon is ὠμόσιτος (541), recalling the Bacchic *omophagia*. Finally Polynices shouts his paean in the cry of Iacchus (ἐπεξιακχάσας, 635). Once the duel with his brother is set, it becomes clear that Eteocles is driven by frenzy. But instead of regarding Dionysus, the god of *mania*, as the main source of causation, he makes the gods in general responsible for his madness (ὦ θεομανές τε καὶ θεῶν μέγα στύγος, 653). The Chorus appropriately associate Eteocles and his *genos* with the irrational (686-8, 692, 699, 756-7, 781, 935). In the first part of the play Eteocles tried to repress the Chorus' *goos*. We see now the link to the later developments. His efforts were in vain, for the predominant lamentations can be read as an anticipation of the tragic events that the Chorus cannot stop any more. *Goos* signifies the city in uproar. It can only be saved by the mutual death of the royal brothers. About this catastrophe the girls then lament again.

Conclusion

The central pre-dramatic and very iconic shield scene condenses the events to signs and images in a quintessentially theatrical manner, a *mise en scène* of a *mise en abyme* of signs hinting at a deeper sense. It mirrors the concern with the cledonomantic meaning of words and attitudes towards the gods and takes it to the forefront through the central position in the middle of the play. Most of all the scene prepares, anticipates and self-referentially reflects the decisive battle between the pairs of epic heroes, culminating in the mutual death of the brothers. In a narrative, very schematic and almost epic form the duels are transposed to a pre-dramatic drama. Being closer to the gods the Chorus is a better prophet and reader of signs, a μάντις . . . τῶν κακῶν (608), from the beginning. The girls visualize and act out the catastrophe, somehow putting forth what a poet, especially an epic *aoidos*, usually does. On the other hand, the king does everything to repress

[34] The Argive army is "of foreign tongue", ἑτεροφώνῳ στρατῷ (170, whereas the tune of the *ololygmos* they should intone is called Greek, Ἑλληνικὸν νόμισμα (269).

[35] On the partial overlap between Ares and Dionysus, see Lonnoy 1985; Bierl 1991: 154-7, esp. 156n135.

these utterances, but the *mania* has taken possession of him for too long. The underlying dramatic myth of the shield scene and the battle of the *Seven Against Thebes* in general probably revolves around a magic purification ritual where twin demons are symbolically destroyed for the well-being of the community. Myth expresses scenarios of duels in excessive violence, whereas ritual in positive terms performs this violent nucleus through substitute figurines. As stated before, the mutual death of the close brothers works like a *katharsis* for the polis. This topic is also openly addressed: to kill one's own brother brings *miasma*, and the purification for the survivor or even for both, in case they kill each other, seems impossible (ἀνδροῖν δ' ὁμαίμοιν θάνατος ὧδ' αὐτοκτόνος, / οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος, 681-2), whereas normal bloodshed is καθάρσιον (680). In lines 738-9 the Chorus ask themselves: "who could bring purification, who could cleanse them from pollution?" (τίς ἂν καθαρμοὺς πόροι; / τίς ἄν σφε λούσειεν;). The solution to the dilemma is that the brothers will not need purification any more. The catharsis happens for the polis. The polluted brothers can save their city through their mutual extinction. That is why the burial will be an issue later. The logic of the hero cult presupposes giving a tomb to both.[36] Heroes can often possess negative traits (Nagy 2013: 45-6). Oedipus himself is a good example of how a questionable and polluted person can become the saviour of a city. To deny burial to Polynices will be a new pollution of the city and its new ruler Creon, as we know from Sophocles' *Antigone*.

Yet we do not know exactly how the end of the play looked. Up to line 1005 – the most probable end of *Septem* (Lupas and Petre 1981: 281-2; Hutchinson 1985: 209-11) – the brothers' cathartic role in their death seems obvious. To a large extent *pathos* is acted out in rituality and performativity. It is conveyed by the Chorus, who assumes a most emotive voice. The king leads a tragic fight for control over voices, gestures and signs. Entangled in a frenzied and one-sided hermeneutics, between utter rationality and an over-ambitious "will to power", king Eteocles attributes a magical power to signs, voices, images and words. The tragedy consists in the fact that due to his will to achieve total control the king neglects the deeper meanings of the tragic and mythic signs that are the basis of Aeschylus' tragedy, whereas the Chorus gain the upper hand. Their *goos* in the beginning activates the city gods, animating their statues, and anticipates the brothers' mutual death, full of *pathos*. The end of the male *genos*, the duelling kings' killing of each other, and their fusion into a blood libation into the soil entail catharsis for the sick city, and last but not least, catharsis for the audience from the excess of *pathos*.

[36] See also Seaford 2012: 163-6.

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Alessandro Grilli*

The Semiotic Basis of Politics in *Seven Against Thebes*[1]

Abstract

Beyond its formal segmentation, the structure of *Seven Against Thebes* is marked by the successive stages of a confrontation, in which the protagonist Eteocles faces first the panicking Chorus, and then (through the messenger's report) the boastful assaults of the foreign warriors. In both phases, the conflict reveals a radical divergence in the understanding of language and signs, and points out the prerogatives of language as one of the play's major themes. This paper tries to read these different stages as illustrations of polarized worldviews reflecting the ambiguous status of the λόγος in the episteme of the first half of the fifth century BCE: in its interaction with the Chorus, Eteocles emphasizes the rational and analytical basis of language in opposition to its expressive value; when discrediting the Seven's ominous vaunts, the Theban leader highlights the necessity of referential constraint, in which he sees a defence against the primitive, fallacious and anti-cultural misuse of signs. In the final phase, when his action showing him as a rational strategist is disrupted by the re-emergence of his father's ἀρά, Eteocles does not fail to reaffirm the need for a convergence between the rules governing the linguistic sign and the roots of moral and political order.

Keywords: Aeschylus; *Seven Against Thebes*; philosophy of language; rationalism; archaic and classical thought

1. Linguistic Horizons in *Seven Against Thebes*

This paper starts from the consideration of some distinctive traits of *Sev-*

[1] Greek quotations are from Hutchinson's text (1985); different textual choices are discussed in the relevant footnotes. English quotations are from Sommerstein's translation (2008), occasionally modified to fit Hutchinson's text or for the sake of my argument. I wish to express my gratitude to my friends and colleagues Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliazzi, and Gherardo Ugolini, for their support and many fruitful discussions on the topics dealt with in this paper. I also thank Carmen Dell'Aversano, Eric Nicholson, Guido Paduano, and the anonymous referees of *Skenè*, for helping me focus on a number of passages of my argument. It goes without saying that I bear full responsibility for its final version. Susane Payne's competence and patience proved invaluable in providing the English translation of the text, and I am deeply grateful for her help.

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en Against Thebes, specifically of what could be labelled the "epistemic fragmentation" which emerges from the actions of the protagonist:[2] his judgements and acts can be seen as expressions of disparate worldviews; this has led interpreters of the text to assume that the play, or its protagonist, lack unity.[3] My aim is to show how this inner contrast is made visible in the structure of the play in a tension involving the semantic field of speech and the different possible approaches to the uses of language. My thesis is that the symbolic dynamics underlying *Seven Against Thebes* encode the ambiguous status of the λόγος in the episteme of the first half of the fifth century BC, where the traditional trust in language as the medium for a magical-sacred unveiling of the world is juxtaposed, in a dialectical relationship but on an even footing, with an innovative consideration of the potential of reasoning and discourse as instruments for the analysis and the management of reality.[4] This inquiry is all the more interesting and relevant if we consider that these different views of language can be shown, in the sym-

[2] I shall be dealing with this problem in a more systematic manner in a study to be published shortly (Grilli 2018).

[3] Starting from Wilamowitz (1914), who sees in the plot's presumed discontinuity evidence of the play's different mythical sources. An article by Solmsen (1937) contributed significantly to the consideration of Eteocles as an inconsistent character. Solmsen enhances the sudden irruption of the Erinys during the course of rationally planned actions – a reading which, at the conclusion of a long series of studies, has recently been further developed by Sewell-Rutter (2007: 15-77; 139 ff.). Here the attention of the reader is drawn to the convergence of the sudden breakthrough of the supernatural and the voluntary action of the character. Among the many analyses intending to demonstrate the discontinuity of Eteocles' character and attributing this inconsistency to various causes, it is that of Winnington-Ingram (1983: 51) which should above all be mentioned. This study recognises in Eteocles' disparate nature the emergence of a conflict between his two social identities; for he is at one and the same time ruler of the Cadmeans and son of Oedipus "in virtue of which he is the common focus of a twofold issue, the destinies of the city and the family, dangerously intertwined". In a similar framework, Thomson's interpretation had already discerned, in the dynamics of the *Seven*, the passage of the aristocratic system towards the organization of a city state, in which "the clans lose their identity in common citizenship" (1916: 315-316 = 1966^3: 285).

[4] The hypothesis of a linear evolution from mythical thought to rationalism, central to a celebrated essay by Wilhelm Nestle (1942^2), is by now deemed simply an interesting chapter in cultural history, having been supplanted by a debate initiated a few years later by Dodds (1951). However, the fact that the ancient philosophers considered themselves as an alternative to traditional mythical thought is incontestable (as is emphasized by Lloyd 1987: 1-49). In general, the most recent studies (cf. for example, Buxton 1999: 1ff.; Morgan 2000: 15ff., in particular 30-7) tend to go in the direction of an emphasis on the coexistence and the complex interaction between the two planes, both for the relevance of literary texts as documents of the history of philosophy (Wians 2009: 1-4) and for the obsolescence of the view linking the origin of philosophy with the development of writing (Atwood Wilkinson 2009: 7-9).

bolic makeup of the text, to be the foundations of opposite political visions, which showcase the transition from the aristocratic political tradition to the democratic order, in which the status of language as an instrument of sharing, analysis and negotiation grows more and more central.

It is usual, and understandably so, for critical interpretations of the *Seven* to place at the centre of their analyses the second episode with its hypnotic scene of the so-called *Redepaare* (369ff.).[5] This centrality is obviously justified, but it risks eliminating the sequence, from the prologue to the final *threnos*, upon which the structure of the play is based. The initial interaction between Eteocles and the scout, or, again, the encounter and resulting argument between the hero and the chorus in the first episode are in danger of losing significance, both from the point of view of content and from that of theatrical impact, if the analysis focuses too closely, or even exclusively, on the deployment of the warriors. The interpretative angle adopted by this paper as its starting point privileges the vision of the architectural configuration of the play in its entirety as a three-stage structure. During the development of the action, its various phases do not depend so much on structural or formal correspondence, as they do on the respective prevalence of both different and complementary attitudes towards the problem of language and communication. If the text is read using the criteria of the philosophy of language it becomes immediately obvious that the development of the *Seven* is founded on a bid to implement an operation of contrastive definition, a gradual sharpening of focus on the prerogatives of language – of its potential, its functions, and its limits.

In the first part of the play Eteocles, whose opinions are more or less identical to those of the scout,[6] shares his views on the difficulty of the siege with the women of Thebes who form the chorus. However, he ends up in violent disagreement with them, expressing himself in very harsh

[5] For the presentation of text and dramatic structure the studies by Fraenkel (1964=1957), Taplin (1977: 146-56) and Thalmann (1978: 105-35) are still of fundamental importance. Ferrari (1970) and Maltomini (1976) attempt to determine the starting point and clarify the unfolding of Eteocles' strategy. The shields have been investigated in relation to the material culture of archaic Greece (Berman 2007) or to their symbolic role in the play (Bacon 1964). The aspect that concerns us most particularly here is the specific object of studies by Bernardete (1968); Cameron (1970); Zeitlin (1982); Judet de La Combe (1987).

[6] Not only because the scout's patrol is the result of a specific order on the part of Eteocles (36), but also because of the trust that the sovereign explicitly places in the reliability of his report (36-7). The scout, in his turn, says he relies on first-hand experience (40-1) and guarantees the factual accuracy of his statements (54). The clearest sign of agreement is that both Eteocles (2-3) and the scout (62) resort to a nautical metaphor when they attribute to the sovereign of the polis the role of 'helmsman' (οἴακα νωμῶν, 3; οἰακοστρόφος, 62).

terms. At this point it is not difficult, in my opinion, to identify the clash between the rational dimension of language and its emotional aspect which underlies the explicit dispute. From the opening lines of the play, and with increasing strength during the conflict with the chorus, Eteocles seems to conform to an analytical, functional, practical *logos*, while the young Theban women (παῖδες, 792) demonstrate a different conception of language, whose essential function is that of the immediate transmission of emotion, a language of figurative and evocative potential. The bone of contention is, in the terminology of contemporary linguistics, the pragmatic dimension of communication, since Eteocles persists in excluding the emotive component of language and giving priority to its propositional aspects, so as to make of it an instrument of lucid and functional analysis of reality.

However, in the second part, which includes the famous scene of the postings, although language is still the protagonist, the terms of the conflict now regard the question of reference, that is to say the relationship between linguistic sign and extralinguistic reality. Later we shall see more clearly how Eteocles' demystification of the Argive champions' bragging is fundamental to the state of referential detachment: the language of the Seven, who constantly assume its hidden power and its potential closeness to sympathetic magic, is treated by Eteocles as pure sign, with no referential function, and therefore delegitimized in its aim to shape reality. Eteocles counters the primitive voice of the Seven with a flexible,[7] versatile *logos* brought into line and controlled by practical objectives. So it is that Eteocles, adopting strategies which are subtly diversified and suggested by their context, demystifies and diminishes arrogance into braggadocio, ominous threats into empty chatter, in the name of a rigorous pragmatism that can be seen to be complying precisely with a world view which is as flawless logically as it is ethically and politically. Eteocles places against signs and words used by the Seven merely to anticipate the fulfilment of personal wishes, a totally different language: in so doing, he manages to reveal the ethical, political and religious limits of the semiosis adopted by the foreign warriors, in the name of a superiority substantiated as much by analytical clarity as by a scrupulous referential precision.

After the first two stages of the play it has become clear that Eteocles is the representative of a vision of language that, although quite far from the rationalistic *logos* of subsequent philosophy, is clearly angled in that direction, especially regarding its aspiration towards analytic disengagement

[7] One example of the flexibility of Eteocles' hermeneutics emerges in his considerations accompanying the posting of Melanippus, where the sovereign's rebuttal of the sympathetic magic implied in Tydeus' emblem (397-9) is immediately followed (402ff.) by a discourse that appropriates its presuppositions. On this problem see Grilli 2018.

and rigour of the relationship with reference. This is obviously not to consider the Seven as a treatise on the philosophy of language: in point of fact the culmination of this process is to be discerned, in the third stage, at the very moment of the sudden beginning of its breakdown. Eteocles' aspiration to perfect an instrument capable of piloting thoughts and actions at a crucial moment seems to find its first confirmation in the efficiency with which the general's plans and orders are carried out. But the posting of Polyneices at the seventh gate, with the sudden surfacing of their father's ἀρά in the chain of events, means that there is a fracture both in Eteocles' tenaciously achieved strategic and rational design, and also in his prudent and reliable anticipation of causal links.

It will be easier to see how the text articulates the outcome of the conflict, and, indeed, the corresponding outcome of this reading of the play, at the conclusion of the paper. For now, it is more useful to further explore the three stages identified above through a more precise analysis of the textual evidence.

2. Analytic Language and the Communication of Emotions

During the first stage, as has been mentioned, contrasting conceptions of language, among other matters, help make visible the antagonism between Eteocles and the young Theban women of the chorus. For the women, communication itself is above all an elaboration of sensory stimuli, to be immediately transformed into the figurative expression of complex emotional patterns, whereas for Eteocles language is the vehicle of a factual communication which privileges the informative and descriptive dimension and is associated with an attitude geared towards analysis and the making of rational decisions.

This opposition is set up in the prologue and the *parodos*, and the confrontation takes place in the first episode. In the opening speech, the protagonist informs the Theban populace of the prophecy of a seer, which tells of an imminent attack (24ff.). Eteocles, who curiously emphasizes the technical character of the divination in order to motivate its plausibility (ἀψευδεῖ τέχνῃ, "with infallible skill", 26), has in fact already sent a scout to find out details about the enemy camp.[8] When the scout returns, his first words highlight the reliability of his information which was gained at first hand (ἥκω σαφῆ τἀκεῖθεν ἐκ στρατοῦ φέρων· / αὐτὸς κατόπτης δ' εἴμ' ἐγὼ τῶν πραγμάτων, "I come bringing definite news from the army

[8] The city's defence hinges upon knowledge gathered from different sources, both religious (the prophet's statement) and technical (the scout's report); this can be read as one of the signs of the above-mentioned epistemic fragmentation (n3).

out there; I was myself an eyewitness of what they were doing", 40-1). The scout returns to his initial concept at the end of his report, reiterating the importance of first-hand investigation for reliable information, and of reliable information for the security of the strategy (κἀγὼ τὰ λοιπὰ πιστὸν ἡμεροσκόπον / ὀφθαλμὸν ἕξω· καὶ σαφηνείᾳ λόγου / εἰδὼς τὰ τῶν θύραθεν ἀβλαβὴς ἔσῃ, "For my part, from now on, I will keep a faithful daytime scout's eye out, and through my clear reports you will know what is happening outside and not come to harm", 66-8).

The chorus comes on stage shortly after this (78ff.) and right from the opening lines they display a different attitude: in contrast to Eteocles, whose information is sourced from a scout he dispatched for this express purpose, and who comes back reporting in minute detail events from inside the enemy camp, the chorus infer their information from sensory evidence, both visual and auditory. This evidence is not so precise as an analytical description, but has the force of immediate perception: αἰθερία κόνις με πείθει φανεῖσ᾽ / ἄναυδος σαφὴς ἔτυμος ἄγγελος, "The dust I see in the air shows me it is so, / a voiceless messenger, but true and certain!", 81-2. The fact that this "voiceless" evidence is configured metaphorically as speech – since by itself it is equivalent to the report of an ἄγγελος – aims to highlight the equivalence and the opposition between the two sources of information. This characterization of the chorus has an obvious purpose from a theatrical standpoint: support the staging of the *parodos*, which in all probability (and in all Greek tragedy this is one of the scenes for which the loss of choreographic and musical resources is most to be regretted) included dances and musical and other sound effects of particular expressive value.[9] But the contrast between the chorus and the protagonist also aims at polarizing their overall attitudes towards reality; the concept of 'certain clearness' (σαφής, σαφήνεια), for example, only appears in the *Seven* in the lines quoted above (40 and 47, both referring to the scout's report), and at l. 82, where 'certain' is a quality of the "voiceless" announcement of the dust: the connotation of this occurrence patently reverses that of the first two ones.

Indeed the chorus goes on to emphasize their auditory perceptions which, though prelinguistic and inarticulate (πεδί᾽ ὁπλόκτυπ᾽ ὠ-/τὶ χρίμπτει βοάν, "The soil <of my> land, struck by hooves, sends the noise right to my ear!", 83-4; ἀκούετ᾽ ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ᾽ ἀσπίδων κτύπον; "Do you hear, or do you not, the clatter of shields?", 100 – an open apostrophe which is addressed to the other members of the chorus, at the same time as, *ipso facto*, it activates the emotivity of the audience; κτύπον δέδορκα,

[9] On the staging see Taplin 1977: 141-2; on the expressive significance of dochmiac metre Medda 1995 and Lomiento 2004. The play's musical aspect has recently been studied by Griffith 2017 (on the *parodos* in particular: 125ff.).

"I see the noise", 103 – a splendid synaesthesia which has been unjustly considered as textually corrupted;[10] cf. again 115; 153 etc.), are treated as equivalent to the analytic report, and give rise to an immediate emotional response.

The entire first episode (181ff.) is devoted to the attempt, on the part of Eteocles, to limit and control this emotional reaction, which he considers damaging for his defence strategy: the extreme terror on the part of the women, although it is understandable from a psychological standpoint, is completely inopportune from a practical one, as it risks triggering a crowd reaction and unleashing panic in the whole city (πολίταις τάσδε διαδρόμους φυγὰς / θεῖσαι διερροθήσατ' ἄψυχον κάκην, "with you running around in all directions like this, your clamour has spread panic and cowardice among the citizens", 191-2). The censorious tone of the protagonist is not due to prejudiced aversion to womankind, as many studies have maintained;[11] this is proved by the fact that when he briefly gives in to his feelings after receiving the news of Polyneices' posting, Eteocles urges himself to exercise self-control – something which, although expressed in different words, assumes the same fear of mimetic contagion: ἀλλ' οὔτε κλαίειν οὔτ' ὀδύρεσθαι πρέπει, / μὴ καὶ τεκνωθῇ δυσφορώτερος γόος ("But it is not proper to cry or lament, lest that give birth to grief even harder to bear", 656-7). Eteocles reproaches the women for howling to express their feelings (αὔειν, λακάζειν, "howl, scream", 186), and insists peremptorily on the duty of obedience (196-9), emphasizing this with a reminder of customary social behaviour (200-1; cf. 230-2). Once more when this is taken up again shortly afterwards the relevance of the opposition is significant: the emotional question in l. 100, which the chorus asks of a generic "you", referring to the chorus maidens as well as to the theatrical audience (ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον; "Do you hear, or do you not, the clatter of shields?"), is reversed at l. 202 by Eteocles, who, with the same disjunctive question, in a totally different practical and 'didactic' acceptation, tries to lead the chorus back to the paths of reason: ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας, ἢ κωφῇ λέγω; ("Did you hear me or not? Or am I talking to the deaf?"). Here too the chorus's answer, with their partial disregard of the proper signif-

[10] Askew's conjecture, δέδοικα for the transmitted δέδορκα, although still printed by Murray in his second edition (1955), is rightly considered "weak and unnatural" by Hutchinson 1985: 63 (but Lesky 1996 [1972]: 131 had already defended the *paradosis*). For a systematic reconsideration of this synaesthetic metaphor see Marinis 2012.

[11] For example Gagarin 1976: 151-62; Zeitlin 1990: 103; Podlecki 1993: 64-72; Stehle 2005. Among the scholars who maintain that Eteocles' attitude is not significant (owing to the patriarchal context of classical Athens), or that it is in any case justified by the action itself, should be recalled Hubbard 1992: 105; Sommerstein 1996: 111-12; Paduano 2013: 15.

icance of the question, shows up the juxtaposed origins of their respective ways of understanding sensation and communication: ἔδεισ' ἀκού-/ σασα τὸν ἁρματόκτυπον ὄτοβον ὄτοβον, / ὅτε τε σύριγγες ἔκλαγξαν ἑλικότροχοι . . . ("I was frightened when I heard the sound of the rattle, the rattle of the chariots, and the noise of the whirling sockets of their wheels . . .", 203-7).[12] The quotation is useful as it also helps the understanding of the intersection of dramaturgical and thematic elements in the tragic text: the chorus's reply to Eteocles, indeed, establishes from the very beginning the distance between the speakers; the young women have certainly heard (ἤκουσας; 202 ~ ἀκούσασα, 203), but not so much Eteocles' words as the sounds of the siege, immediately evoked in great detail.[13] This rampant lyricism is the beginning of an epirrhematic dialogue (203ff.) during which Eteocles pressures the women with his demands for reason (in declaimed iambic trimeter), while the chorus continue to express themselves in singing the frantic dochmii of the *parodos*. This confrontation of two world views, which may be analysed as conflicting approaches focalized on language, also emerges in the text in terms of contrasted formal and dramatic features (the chorus very probably continue dancing during Eteocles' intervention which can be seen as an attempt to control motion and as a *rappel à l'ordre*). On the level of content, the dramatic and theatrical contrast is strengthened during the stichomythia which concludes the epirrhematic dialogue, with an increasing divergence between the attitudes of Eteocles and the chorus; in point of fact the chorus simply witness the events and then echo the emotions these events elicit, whereas Eteocles tries more and more resolutely to impose silence (249-53):

Χο. δέδοικ'· ἀραγμὸς ἐν πύλαις ὀφέλλεται.
Ετ. οὐ σῖγα μηδὲν τῶνδ' ἐρεῖς κατὰ πτόλιν;
Χο. ὦ ξυντέλεια, μὴ προδῷς πυργώματα.
Ετ. οὐκ ἐς φθόρον σιγῶσ' ἀνασχήσῃ τάδε;

[CHORUS I'm frightened! And the clatter at the gates gets louder and louder. / ETEOCLES Will you not keep quiet, instead of talking all about it in public? / CHORUS Assembled gods, do not betray our walls! / ETEOCLES Can't you put up with it in silence, confound you?]

The immediate continuation of the incident shows how from this point on the conflict is only postponed. Eteocles concludes the dialogue with an attempt to influence the chorus's prayer, which in his opinion only needs to

[12] On this passage see Novelli 2005, *ad l.*

[13] Edmunds (2002) uses these textual hints to substantiate his hypothesis of an extra-dramatic space, starting from the auditory component of the staging.

conform to religious norms and not be emotional and agitated (266ff.). He himself provides the example of an impeccable votive invocation, in which he addresses the local gods in a dignified manner, promising them sacrifices and the consecration of the war spoils (271ff.). He then concludes with the presentation of his defence strategy (282ff.), contrasting his demonstrations of ritual and tactical order with the ματαίοις κἀγρίοις ποιφύγμασιν ("wild, useless pantings", 280) of the chorus. In so doing, he emphasizes once again the distance between the analytic and functional language that he, the general, employs, and the purely expressive kind used by the women. But, at the end of the episode, the first *stasimon* is followed by an outstanding performance, on the part of the chorus, of their vision of the potential sack of Thebes (321ff.). The structural separation of this sung and danced *stasimon* is also justified functionally by the fact that it may be contrasted with the general's capability for rational forecast, wholly based on reports, conjectures and carefully planned ritual offerings. The women's capacity for forecast is a totally emotional one, as it is founded on a lyric and visionary presentiment of imminent suffering.

This opposition continues in the subsequent sections of the play: at the beginning of the second episode, for example, the text greets the arrival of an "eyewitness" (κατόπτης, 369), and accentuates the general's desire to obtain information (μαθεῖν, 373) as he listens to the news as ἀρτίκολλον . . . λόγον (ibid.), that is, as "precise and faithful report" (ἀρτίκολλος is a metaphor from the language of craftsmen and literally means 'tightly glued', hence 'close-fitting').[14] The chorus's reaction to the same news, on the other hand, is entirely to be expected: ἱκνεῖται λόγος διὰ στηθέων, / τριχὸς δ' ὄρθιος πλόκαμος ἵσταται, "Their words pierce through my breast, / and each lock of my hair stands up on end", 563-4. Eteocles completely understands this reaction, as he had already shown that he feared the σπερχνούς τε καὶ ταχυρρόθους / λόγους ("a flurry of hasty, noisy words", 285-6) and the inevitable confusion that would ensue.

[14] Occurrences of ἀρτίκολλος are quite scanty: the only ancient parallels for this passage are Aesch. *Ch.* 580 and Soph. *Tr.* 768. From both it can be inferred that the original meaning of the word was 'tightly glued' (of a garment to a human body in Sophocles' passage; of things "fitting well together", *LSJ*, in the *Choephori*). Ancient commentaries on the passage of *Seven* explain the word as a reference to Eteocles' eager anticipation of the messenger's report, or to his entry so 'close in time'. But we know of no further ancient occurrence with this meaning. Hutchinson (1985: 107) rightly supposes that the paradosis ἀρτίκολλον, if referred to λόγον, "might mean that the report fitted accurately the events it described"; anyway, he ends up rejecting this meaning (surprisingly dismissed as "not appropriate") in favour of the "more natural" (but also much less interesting and meaningful) sense of 'right in time', referring to Eteocles' entry. In order to do so, Hutchinson of course needs to alter the text and print Paley's conjecture ἀρτικόλλως. My own reading sticks to the *paradosis*.

The distance between Eteocles' position and that of the chorus is further specified in one of the scout's speeches, who, in a momentary display of fear, takes up an intermediate position: although still on the side of Eteocles' pragmatism, he cannot avoid showing, on occasion, his own emotional involvement. When he describes Hippomedon in the fourth *Redepaar* of the second episode, the scout yields to a metadiscursive expression of his own feelings which for the study is of particular interest (489-90):

ἅλω δὲ πολλήν, ἀσπίδος κύκλον λέγω,
ἔφριξα δινήσαντος, οὐκ ἄλλως ἐρῶ.

[I shuddered, I won't deny it, to see him brandish his great round orb of a shield.]

The first line, with its curious redundancy, juxtaposes the metaphorical and literal designation of a single object. This is a deliberate clumsiness, as it allows the text to contain a conscious distinction between the plane of poetic intensity and that of simple propositional denotation. The significance of this redundancy is made clear, in my opinion, from the next line onwards: the first hemistich makes explicit (ἔφριξα, 'I felt frightened') an emotive reaction of the ἄγγελος, while the second one provides a sort of metadiscursive justification of this feeling. The parallelism between the two lines therefore allows to read the first hemistich of l. 489, which hyperbolically equates Hippomedon's shield with the circular face of a heavenly body,[15] as a mark of emotional speech, while the metadiscursive explanations swiftly restore the general tone of the discourse to the plane of analytic and objective description, which the scout knows to be preferred by the sovereign.

3. The Problem of Reference

The following part of the play (369-652) constitutes the second stage of my analysis, and it takes up nearly the whole of the second episode.[16] In this long segment a juxtaposition between the king of Thebes and his enemy champions is established and developed. The enemy warriors have drawn lots for their various positions (55) and they are each presented in some detail. The Argive champions, with the exception of Amphiaraos, who seems to share the view of Eteocles and the Thebans and accuses Tydeus

[15] See Hutchinson 1985: 123.

[16] It is, indeed, only from the answer to the seventh *Redepaar* (653ff.), that Eteocles will have to reckon with the unexpected crisis factor of the presence of Polyneices at the seventh gate, which triggers the last stage of his journey and which will be discussed in the next section.

and Polyneices to be the advocates of a radically unjust war (580ff.), present themselves at their battle stations with an exaggerated show of their attributes and of their determination to gain their objectives. They all exploit, both in the words they utter or through the semiotics of the images displayed on their shields, the sympathetic magic of signs. Eteocles' answers refute their confidence and help to clarify the concept of language and communication underlying his own words.

As obvious even at first glance, the first five *Redepaare* are functionally similar to one another; in the sixth the unusual presence of Amphiaraos is referred to and commented on as that of a religious and morally upright man who finds himself part of the Argive expedition against his will; then the seventh constitutes the epitome of the first five in the presentation of Polyneices, when Eteocles' reaction causes events to precipitate towards a breakdown. If, as I believe, this similarity between the *Redepaare* is well-founded, it is hard to deny the particular importance that the introduction to Eteocles' first answering speech (397-9) now acquires: simply because of its opening position and for its indicative nature, it somehow functions as a premise to all the replies, and may be considered as an expression of Eteocles' predictable opinion:

> κόσμον μὲν ἀνδρὸς οὔτιν' ἂν τρέσαιμ' ἐγώ,
> οὐδ' ἑλκοποιὰ γίγνεται τὰ σήματα·
> λόφοι δὲ κώδων τ' οὐ δάκνουσ' ἄνευ δορός.
>
> [I would not tremble at the accoutrements of any man; and shield-devices cannot inflict wounds, nor can crests or bells hurt without a spear.]

Just as in the conflict with the women of the chorus, when Eteocles tries to curb the emotional component of their outburst, here too his censorship – and his distrust – concern the 'expressive' dimension of discourse, the κόσμον, the ornamental devices, that semiotic surplus with which the warrior tries to objectify his feelings (or to solicit other people's) through their expression and, at the same time, summons to his aid the strength hidden deep within signs. This view of language can be seen to enable the possibility of envisioning a paradoxical continuity between the emotional communication of the chorus and the ominous, almost magical language of the enemy chiefs (both of which types of expression, being characterized, not fortuitously, by Eteocles as vain, μάταια: cf. 280 ~ 438 and 442). Eteocles, on the other hand, posits a purely referential idea of the λόγος, in which language is at the service of its own denotation, and where there exists between *res* and *verbum* a purely linear designatory relationship, governed by an ethical and religious parameter. This important methodological premise permits the resolution of the apparent contradiction which arises in

the posting speech by Melanippus: in point of fact, immediately after having demonstrated his rationalistic attitude when he remarks "shield-devices cannot inflict wounds", Eteocles casually formulates a kledonomantic[17] denial of the device on Tydeus's shield which seems to correspond with the logic of sympathetic magic. The contradiction does not really exist, as Eteocles believes neither in his kledonomantic confutation nor in the magical and sympathetic power of emblems.[18] Rather, he remains faithful to his own idea of language as a tool for the analytic and rational description of reality, whose dignity and efficiency are in his opinion the only criteria worth considering.

All the kledonomantic confutations which Eteocles expertly comes up with should therefore really be considered 'ironic', that is, intended to demonstrate, with no intellectual engagement whatsoever, that the application of identical principles of sympathetic magic can in fact lead to totally opposed interpretations of the very same signs. It follows, inevitably, that it is precisely the interpretative ambivalence of this type of discourse which debars it from consideration in this context: it is essentially contradictory, therefore rationally untenable.

That Eteocles' kledonomancy is ironic, and should therefore not be considered as an expression of the character's beliefs, is confirmed by the fact that the hero never assumes that his own brilliant demystifications should be taken at face value. From the very first speech, in which he wittily returns Tydeus' threats to the sender, Eteocles does not neglect to soberly defer to fate and to the unfathomable will of the gods: ἔργον δ' ἐν κύβοις Ἄρης κρινεῖ ("Ares will decide the issue with his dice", 414). In the same way, the other Theban champions are indeed shielded by the sovereign's skilful semiotic contentions, but their success is seen to depend, in the last analysis, on metaphysical uncertainty. Polyphontes is identified as being under the protection of Artemis and may depend upon the favour of the gods (449-50); the possible outcome of Megareus' duel is left uncertain;[19]

[17] On kledonomancy see Zeitlin 1982: 46-9; she emphasizes the potentially magic power of language in the following terms: "The operation of a kledonomantic system attests to the basic instability and ambiguity of language, where one discourse can lie behind another. It attests to the arbitrary character of signs in the signifying system whereby meaning can shift, gaps can open up between signifier and signified, and new sequences of signs can be created and recreated. Yet once the sign is seized as κληδών, it loses its indeterminacy and gains instead a *dynamic power* to determine the future" (47, my emphasis).

[18] At this point my idea of Eteocles' hermeneutics differs from that of Zeitlin (1982: 48): she only recognizes (tragic) irony in the protagonist's failure to understand the pertinency of the *omina* not simply to the city's destiny but to his own.

[19] But if the Theban warrior wins, he will be able to exult in having beaten not just his actual opponent but also the one represented on the shield (478-9). This assimilation

Hyperbius wants to know his destiny ἐν χρείᾳ τύχης, "in this crisis of fortune", 506; the forecast of victory on the part of Megareus' brother, Actor, will be fulfilled only "if the gods are willing" (θεῶν θελόντων, 562). Again, in the case of Lasthenes, who will confront Amphiaraus, Eteocles closes on a note of religious fatalism (θεοῦ δὲ δῶρόν ἐστιν εὐτυχεῖν βροτούς, "but mortals' good fortune is the gift of gods", 625). In the end, Eteocles' semiotic virtuosity seems to be underpinned more by the intent of showing up the inconsistency of the Argives' exhibitionism than by the illusion of being able to endow the Theban champions with the efficacious protection of sympathetic magic.

In Tydeus' case, the irony is clear in l. 402 (τάχ' ἂν γένοιτο μάντις ἀνοία τινί, "perhaps someone's folly may prove prophetic"). Here the Argive champion is sarcastically referred to using the indefinite pronoun (τινί, "for someone"), and his choice of emblem is considered as "folly" (ἀνοία), as he is unaware of the ominous implications which underlie the term νύκτα ("night", 400). To the semiotics of wishful thinking characteristic of the Argives, Eteocles juxtaposes an alternative semiotics based firstly, on a refusal of expressive language in favour of efficacious and linguistically essential action; secondly, on moral principle as the only binding criterion of linguistic validity; thirdly, on the mistrust of the ambiguity and arbitrariness of symbolic signification, and therefore on the recuperation of a different 'etymological' significance of words.

It is worth quoting in full the speech in which Eteocles posts Melanippus against Tydeus, and which can be scrutinized as model of all following speeches (403-15):[20]

εἰ γὰρ θανόντι νὺξ ἐπ' ὄμμασιν πέσοι,
τῷ τοι φέροντι σῆμ' ὑπέρκομπον τόδε
γένοιτ' ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐνδίκως τ' ἐπώνυμον, 405
καὐτὸς κατ' αὐτοῦ τήνδ' ὕβριν μαντεύεται.
ἐγὼ δὲ Τυδεῖ κεδνὸν 'Αστακοῦ τόκον
τῶνδ' ἀντιτάξω προστάτην πυλωμάτων,
μάλ' εὐγενῆ τε καὶ τὸν Αἰσχύνης θρόνον
τιμῶντα καὶ στυγοῦνθ' ὑπέρφρονας λόγους· 410
αἰσχρῶν γὰρ ἀργός, μὴ κακὸς δ' εἶναι φιλεῖ.
σπαρτῶν δ' ἀπ' ἀνδρῶν ὧν Ἄρης ἐφείσατο
ῥίζωμ' ἀνεῖται – κάρτα δ' ἔστ' ἐγχώριος –
Μελάνιππος· ἔργον δ' ἐν κύβοις Ἄρης κρινεῖ.

of referent and signifier as homogeneous elements of a set/whole is, in my opinion, yet another sign of the irony implicit in Eteocles' kledonomancy.

[20] My reading of this scene adheres to the hermeneutical perspective of Judet de La Combe 1987.

Δίκη δ' ὁμαίμων κάρτα νιν προστέλλεται 415
εἴργειν τεκούσῃ μητρὶ πολέμιον δόρυ.

[For if the night of death should fall on his eyes, then this boastful device would prove to be rightly and properly true to its name for its bearer, and he is making this arrogant prophecy against himself. I will post against Tydeus, as defender of this gate, the brave son of Astacus, a man of very noble birth and one who honours the throne of Modesty and hates arrogant words; for he never does a shameful deed, and to be cowardly is not his way. He is a scion arising from the Sown Men whom Ares spared, and a man of this land through and through – Melanippus. Ares will decide the issue with his dice; but it is very much the just duties of kinship that send him forth to protect the mother that bore him from the enemy's spear.]

From ll. 404-6 it can be perceived that mantic and kledonomancy coincide to transform the σῆμ' ὑπέρκομπον, the "boastful device" of Tydeus into a sign which is really (ὀρθῶς) and authentically (ἐνδίκως) meaningful (ἐπώνυμον), that is to say an anticipation of divine punishment (κατ' αὐτοῦ . . . μαντεύεται, "he is making this arrogant prophecy against himself", 406). The insistence on the moral disapproval of excess is shared by the other speeches: Capaneus is condemned for the χαρᾷ ματαίᾳ ("foolish joy", 442) with which he shows "contempt for the gods" (θεοὺς ἀτίζων, 441); Hippomedon provokes Pallas Onca who abhors his ὕβριν ("arrogance", 502): Parthenopaeus makes Eteocles pronounce a collective denunciation against all the ἀνοσίοις κομπάσμασιν ("unholy boasts", 551) of the Argive champions; Eteocles alludes to Polyneices as a φωτὶ παντόλμῳ φρένας ("a man with so utterly audacious a mind", 671). In Eteocles' eyes, then, the ἐπωνυμία, the 'meaningful' semanticity of language, depends on the moral correctness of the *énoncé*, bringing together, as the connotation of the adverbs ὀρθῶς and ἐνδίκως in l. 405 shows, the logical matrix of the linguistic reference with its moral component. The same thing happens in the case of Capaneus, whom Eteocles expects to see ξὺν δίκῃ ("with justice", "justly", 444) struck by lightning – where the meaning of the syntagm ξὺν δίκῃ recalls that of ἔνδικος or of πάνδικος at ll. 405; 670; 673. Moreover, it does not seem irrelevant to recall that the metaphoric foundation of some of the key concepts of law, as is indeed the case with ὀρθόν and δίκη, consists in the idea of 'direct indication':[21] a just thing is one which can be established linearly, with an undisturbed and direct correspondence between sign and ref-

[21] For the etymology of δίκη/δίκαιος see Frisk 1954: 393-4 and Chantraine 1968: I, 283-4; for a semantic analysis, Havelock 1969: 49-50. The etymological connection with δείκνυμι is commonplace and illustrates how the basic meaning is 'indicate', 'show': for Lloyd-Jones the original meaning of the word is "the 'indication' of the requirement of the divine law, themis" (1971: 167n23).

erent. This convergence may be considered a distinctive feature of Eteocles' 'linguistic' thought: he tends unfailingly to guide justice towards precision, namely, to consider ethical principles and semantic rigour bound to one another in a relationship of mutual validation.

Against Tydeus, and against the unacceptable conception of language implicit in his actions, Eteocles posts a warrior who has been chosen with this particular semiotic idea in mind: Melanippus is of course in the first place "nobly born" (εὐγενῆ, 409), so that, from the perspective of aristocratic ethics of which Eteocles is the paragon, he may guarantee, *a priori*, a solid moral foundation. This is proved by the fact that the young man holds Modesty in due respect, and rejects with horror any speech which goes beyond the bounds of moderation (409-10). Once again, meaningless boastfulness comes up short against calm self-control, which, for its spontaneity, is also in significant contrast with the hard-won silence imposed on the women of the chorus. Veneration for the "throne of Modesty" is undoubtedly associated with a sparing use of words, as is shown by a vague air of nostalgia during the description of an old-fashioned upbringing in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (961ff.; cf. in particular l. 963 πρῶτον μὲν ἔδει παιδὸς φωνὴν γρύξαντος μηδέν' ἀκοῦσαι, "No child would ever be heard, for one thing, indulging in whining complaints." [trans. Halliwell 2016]; cf. also 998 and 1003). Melanippus' personality is therefore defined through negation, citing those deeds of which the warrior is incapable, deeds, for instance, which are qualified as being ignoble (αἰσχρῶν) and cowardly (κακὸς . . . εἶναι). In the same way, other Theban champions are characterized for their capacity to act in an efficient and reasonable manner whereas their adversaries use too many words. Capaneus is "loud-mouthed" (στόμαργος, 447) and a tireless blasphemer, ἀπογυμνάζων στόμα (441, "who is exercising his mouth"); Actor, on the contrary, is incapable of boasting, and resolute in action (ἀνὴρ ἄκομπος, χεὶρ δ' ὁρᾷ τὸ δράσιμον, "a man who does not boast but whose hand can see what needs to be done", 554); Lasthenes is agile and sensible (γέροντα τὸν νοῦν, σάρκα δ' ἡβῶσαν φέρει, "who has got a mature mind but youthful flesh", 622) and he, too, is decisive in action (623-4).

Finally, Eteocles returns to Melanippus' noble birth, not in generic terms this time, but specifically: the Theban champion is of the race of the Sown Men, and therefore he is κάρτα . . . ἐγχώριος ("a man of this land through and through", 413). The reminder of autochthony,[22] from Eteocles' preferred referential perspective, works as a sort of 'etymological' validation – on-

[22] Cameron (1970: 85-95) links the relationship with the soil to the central symbolic nucleus of the play (birth and death of their shared mother earth concerns the Sown-Men as much as the last of the Labdacids). For a detailed analysis of the theme of autochthony see Rader 2009.

ly not on the level of the signifier, as would be obvious and logical, but paradoxically on that much more sound and reliable one of the referent: to be ἐγχώριος, that is, autochthonous, to be able to claim a "root" (ῥίζωμα) which connects the chosen warrior's body directly to the Theban soil, τεκούσῃ μητρί ("the mother that bore him", 416; cf. also l. 16), is the functional equivalent of being ἐπώνυμος, 'of a meaningful name', that is of confirming, through a present-day manifestation the deep potential roots of the meaning implicit in the name (as several characters agree in highlighting at ll. 8-9; 135; 536; 658; 829).

In the description of Melanippus, the reference to the mother who gave birth to him is one of the signals authorizing a reading of the *Redepaare* as a structured and symmetrical whole. Even without wanting to go too far in the search for correspondences,[23] it is clear that the first (Tydeus vs Melanippus) and last pair of speeches (Polyneices vs Eteocles) are indeed placing the two main champions of the Theban expedition, Tydeus and Polyneices, both sons-in-law of Adrastus, king of Argos, at the furthest points of opposing extremes. Melanippus, opponent of Tydeus, is thus a prefiguration of Eteocles, future opponent of Polyneices,[24] and his rightful collocation with regard to the mother country accentuates the contrasting transgressive action embarked on by the Labdacid in exile. The exploit is defined as being unjust from the very moment of Polyneices' birth (in a telling periphrasis: φυγόντα μητρόθεν σκότον, "when he escaped the darkness of the womb", 664), and even his own ally, Amphiaraus, reproves him for being a profaner of his mother country (μητρός τε πηγὴν τίς κατασβέσει δίκη; "What claim of justice can quench the mother-source?", 584).

Overall, I believe that Eteocles' demystification of the enemy emblems is oriented to a notion of justice which tendentially converges with a linear and transparent semiosis: the only secure guarantee of the Theban champions' fate, beyond the inscrutable will of the gods, remains the matchless strength of reference.

[23] The object of a systematic exploration in Zeitlin 1982: 171-7; see also Wilkens, where the scholar makes the reconstruction of a hypothesized modular symmetry at the basis of the entire second episode the objective of his detailed (in my opinion not utterly convincing) critical and textual analysis (1974: 26-61).

[24] Besides the structural symmetry, which, for example, in Wilkens' scheme, too (1974: 29, 60), links the first and last pairs of speeches, the sign of a correspondence seems guaranteed by the distant echo of a similar characterization (411: αἰσχρῶν γὰρ ἀργός, μὴ κακὸς δ' εἶναι φιλεῖ ~ 685: κακῶν δὲ κᾀσχρῶν οὔτιν' εὐκλείαν ἐρεῖς) – as if to say that the similarity of character of Melanippus and Eteocles (strengthened by the paronomastic echo of εὐκλείαν) lies in their identical refusal of 'ugly' and 'cowardly' actions.

4. Consensus, Ethics, Etymology: the Rational Foundation of Politics

Eteocles' frame of reference, clearly revealed during his confrontation first with the chorus and later (indirectly) with the Argive champions, is a sign of the tendency towards total control which is a distinguishing trait of his character – or at least of his aspiration to organize efficiently a certain situation in its entirety, based on an examination of the available facts which is as systematic as possible. The third phase of Eteocles' confrontation with other approaches to language and communication begins, indeed, when the seventh speech of the messenger reports the posting of his brother Polyneices at the seventh gate. This news, which the hero receives as a dramatic and terrifying adversity, overturns all his organized strategies and brings to the fore various areas of conflict.

In the first place, the imminent implementation of Oedipus' curse, and with it the punishment for Laius' erstwhile transgression, reveals the rigid and indiscriminate nature of divine power, which can even strike a righteous man if he is associated with a group of people who are compromised in some way. In the context of the Labdacid γένος, tainted by Laius' guilt, Oedipus' curse against his sons, and Polyneices' unholy aggression of his fatherland, even Eteocles' civic virtue is useless. In the text, this involvement of the righteous in the punishment of the unjust is considered to be a traditional and self-evident fact. Eteocles himself refers to it when he comments upon the anomaly of Amphiaraus siding with the Argive chiefs (597ff.). In this passage, Eteocles expresses himself in terms that should be extended, by tragic irony, to his own predicament, as innocent heir of a family which is branded by guilt and impurity. The most relevant aspect of these lines, above and beyond the many questions they raise, lies, in my opinion, in the great prominence they give to Eteocles' inclination to consider situations and problems as complex, interwoven systems. This is a crucial point in a political reading of the play and it is confirmed by an extensive network of textual indications. The overall picture of Eteocles as an impartial, ethical and reasonable character, right up to the clash with the forces of an adverse metaphysical power, demonstrates, in the end, the root of the problem of world order, which considers the religious plane in potential opposition to order attainable by human means.

The second aporia revealed by Polyneices' posting is dependent on the first, as it consists in the discrepancy between the traditional moral and religious rule (incarnated, as is usual in tragedy, by the chorus) and the attempt at a rational solution of the problem. Indeed, from the religious point of view the correct choice on the part of Eteocles would be the refusal to

fight. This would have the primary advantage of avoiding a potentially inexpiable pollution (this is the aspect on which the chorus places the greatest emphasis, 681-2), and also a secondary benefit, from an individual point of view, in that the king would be guaranteed not to lose his life. But this would be an apolitical, improvised and above all individualistic solution, as it would detach the sovereign's choices from that process of deliberate action undertaken right from the start. As he is responsible for the polis, the king cannot disregard the fact that he must decide not what is advantageous to him personally but what is best for the city as a whole. Consequently, the first effect of the option not to fight is a manifestation of the tension, or better of the contradiction which sets the respect for religious constraints against the execution of a 'politically' deliberated military strategy.

A rational evaluation of the events encourages the decision to fight, for several reasons: the more predictable one is stated by Eteocles when he rejects the solicitation to be cautious addressed to him by the chorus (716-7, quoted below). He reminds them of military ethics which, as is documented from the earliest periods of Greek culture, binds the citizen (all the more so if he is a leader) to his responsibility and obliges him never to retreat before the danger of combat for the defence of his country. More specifically, Eteocles knows that confronting his brother is a sort of 'linguistic' verification of his cause, because only direct combat would permit him to pit his own 'semantic' justice, composed of moral rectitude and of the most rigorous correspondence between facts and words, directly against the Justice exhibited by Polyneices, sign without referent as are all the images on the Argive shields (670-1):

ἦ δῆτ' ἂν εἴη πανδίκως ψευδώνυμος
Δίκη, ξυνοῦσα φωτὶ παντόλμῳ φρένας.

[Truly Justice would be utterly false to her name if she consorted with a man with so utterly audacious a mind.]

Polyneices is indeed the man who subverts the linguistic code, overturning the bond of continuity with the motherland in a contrastive relationship (cf. 584) and trying to impose the magic energy of language on an intractable reality (659-61):

τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα τοὐπίσημ' ὅποι τελεῖ,
εἴ νιν κατάξει χρυσότευκτα γράμματα
ἐπ' ἀσπίδος φλύοντα σὺν φοίτῳ φρενῶν.

[We shall soon know where that blazon will end up, whether those letters worked in gold, blathering insanely on his shield, are really going to bring him home.]

The figure of Justice depicted on his shield is in point of fact a sign separated from its referent: the golden letters are defined as φλύοντα (661), that is 'seething', under the pressure of a mental energy that is eluding control (σὺν φοίτῳ φρενῶν, ibid., where φοῖτος stands for 'going wandering'). The comparison with *PV* 504 (μάτην φλῦσαι, 'to be mad'; cf. as well Nic. *Alex.* 214: μανίης ὕπο μυρία φλύζειν, 'regurgitate a thousand mad things')[25] demonstrates that at the heart of this metaphor of mental disorder lies the connection between an excess of expressive energy (φλύω = 'to bubble' used of gas that comes freely to the surface of a boiling liquid or melting metal)[26] and the absence of a referential link, which could still anchor the mind, through language, to the principle of reality.

The fatalism of Eteocles' choice hides, in the end, a possible ulterior element of rational evaluation. Since Oedipus' curse is directed symmetrically against both brothers, it is probable that the hero foresees the result of the duel as a reciprocal killing. In this case, the death of Oedipus' sons, both of them 'without children', as we learn from the chorus (ἀτέκνους, 828), would imply the extinction of the royal house,[27] and with it the fulfilment and auspicable extinction of the ἀρά that, through the Labdacids, burdens the polis. In this case too, however, the application of a rational criterion to these decisions is expressed through the constant prevalence of the political (that is, of a significance determined by collective interests) over the subjective and the individual.

Here too it would be mistaken to attribute to Eteocles, as military leader and politician, an idea of a generally shared world view in conformation with the prevalence of custom and common sense. On more than one occasion the text shows Eteocles distancing himself from the opinions of common people (4-8; 218; 225). Above all – and this seems to me the most interesting feature –, Eteocles is able to distance himself from common sense when it is a question of rejecting the appeal from the chorus to retire from his posting (716-7):

Χο. νίκην γε μέντοι καὶ κακὴν τιμᾷ θεός.
Ετ. οὐκ ἄνδρ' ὁπλίτην τοῦτο χρὴ στέργειν ἔπος.

[25] See also Hesych. φ 663: φλυσ(σ)ῶσα· μαινομένη.

[26] As is emphasized by the ancient *scholion* to Aesch. *PV* 504.

[27] Hutchinson (1985: 185) deletes ἀτέκνους as corrupted. His linguistic and metrical arguments are ingenious, but not fully convincing (for example, assuming that "non-melic anapaests very rarely have four consecutive shorts" does not necessarily make of this passage an unparalleled, impossible unicum). Therefore, the text may be kept, as in most modern editions. For the sake of my argument it is relevant to observe that implications of total destruction of Oedipus' γένος also occur in other passages of the *Seven*: cfr. 689-91; 813 – to mention only passages of undisputed authenticity.

[Chorus Yet god respects even an inglorious victory. / Eteocles That's not an expression that a man-at-arms should tolerate.]

The chorus' proposal is made in an apparently gnomic form (Eteocles seems to imply this when talking of ἔπος) and has the flavour of a saying aimed at justifying an ethic of compromise.[28] But for Eteocles this sort of consensus is unacceptable as it does not accord with his system of values, based as we have seen on the convergence of ethics with logical and referential rigour. In the end, Eteocles' ethical stance, which seems to aspire to being considered as *more geometrico demonstrata*, consists wholly in the attempt to restore to language the capacity of a complete and binding designation, in a sort of idealistic, ingenuous, but, in any case, heroic ethicization of semiosis. Only on these conditions is Eteocles inclined to join in the dynamics of cultural exchange, and to share a knowledge which is authentically and literally 'making sense'.

Confirmation of this attitude may be found in the mirroring that may be discerned between Eteocles and Amphiaraus, the virtuous prophet (ἄνδρα σωφρονέστατον, "a man of the highest virtue", 568), who has reluctantly sided with the impious Argive warriors. Just like Eteocles, in fact more so given his prophetic powers, Amphiaraus is able to see things as they really are, and from this diagnostic capacity he derives a total refusal of 'expressive' language, in which he clearly discerns the risk of mystification. Accordingly, Amphiaraus has no emblem on his shield, as any device could determine, in a possible contrast with actions undertaken, an intolerable discrepancy between sign and referent, a dyscrasia that archaic culture perceives as the divergence between the substance of being and the falsehood of seeming: σῆμα δ' οὐκ ἐπῆν κύκλῳ· / οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος, ἀλλ' εἶναι θέλει ("On its circle there was no image; for he desires not the appearance of excellence but the reality", 591-2).[29]

[28] Here Hutchinson's observation (1985: 160) seems pertinent: the chorus do not express an opinion commonly shared, but stick to a negative position only to highlight Eteocles' moral qualities – exactly as in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (79-85), where Neoptolemus rejects Odysseus' considerations by declaring that he prefers καλῶς / δρῶν ἐξαμαρτεῖν ἢ νικᾶν κακῶς (94-5). From the archaic tradition (see for example Theogn. 1.971-2) to tragedy (see for example Eur. *Andr.* 777-8), ignoble victory is always condemned, or at least absurd and self-defeating (as in Aesop. 197, where the ass who wins the tug o' war ends up by falling off a cliff: νίκα, κακὴν γὰρ νίκην νικᾷς).

[29] The mythic variants relative to this character are discussed in Pfeijffer 1999: 535-6; for the differing treatment of him in the Seven and in Pindar's *Eighth Pythian* see Foster 2017. For Otis 1960: 163-4 the parallelism that links Eteocles and Amphiaraus does not include awareness – the understanding, that is, that a person's fate is unrelated to his moral worth. This parallelism is developed further by De Vito (1999), who sees in the prophet the mediator of a choice that coincides precisely with the

Still more useful towards the clarification of the conditions Eteocles poses as necessary for participating in social exchange are the words of reproval that the prophet Amphiaraus directs at Polyneices; here the outrageous anticultural nature of war against the motherland is underlined, while negating any compatibility with civic memory (579-83):

> λέγει δὲ τοῦτ᾽ ἔπος διὰ στόμα·
> "Ἦ τοῖον ἔργον καὶ θεοῖσι προσφιλές, 580
> καλόν τ᾽ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ λέγειν μεθυστέροις,
> πόλιν πατρῴαν καὶ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς
> πορθεῖν, στράτευμ᾽ ἐπακτὸν ἐμβεβληκότα."

> [he utters from his lips: "Is an act like this really smiled on by the gods, is it an honourable thing for posterity to hear and tell of, to devastate one's fatherland and its native gods by bringing a foreign army to invade it?"]

Contrary to what is emphasized here by Amphiaraus, the fact that the actions that myth prefers to transmit to posterity are actually the anticultural ones (above all the myth of the Labdacids themselves) is an extremely interesting question, but which is beyond the remit of the unfortunate prophet . . . At this point, the only relevant fact for us is that civic identity, based on family relationships, both real and metaphorical, with the μητρὸς . . . πηγή ("maternal fount") and with the πατρὶς . . . γαῖα ("fatherland", 584-5), presupposes a continuity of shared discursive memory (καλόν τ᾽ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ λέγειν μεθυστέροις, "an honourable thing for posterity to hear and tell of", 581) that Polyneices' choice has made impossible. The memory mentioned here is obviously that good memory which prolongs through the ages the good reputation auspicated for citizens by the chorus (κῦδος τοῖσδε πολίταις, "glory for these citizens", 317).

Eteocles, too, by refusing to act as a coward, shows he aspires to this εὐκλεία ('good repute') which permits him to be unreservedly faithful to the character represented by his name (683-5):

> εἴπερ κακὸν φέρει τις, αἰσχύνης ἄτερ
> ἔστω· μόνον γὰρ κέρδος ἐν τεθνηκόσιν·
> κακῶν δὲ κᾀσχρῶν οὔτιν᾽ εὐκλείαν ἐρεῖς. 685

> [If one must suffer evil, let it not be shameful; that is the only profit the dead can gain. You can never speak of a good reputation arising from a disaster which is also a disgrace.]

These lines hold a position of particular interest in the text, as they constitute Eteocles' first reply, after he has just decided to meet Polyneices in a

protagonist's acceptance of necessity.

duel, to the women of the chorus who are beginning to try to dissuade him. The lines evince, right from the beginning, the notion of evil that comes from outside (εἴπερ κακὸν φέρει τις, "If one must suffer evil"), which will be picked up in a circular manner, demonstrating the thematic cohesion of this section of the play, in the last line pronounced by Eteocles before leaving the stage (θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά, "When the gods send evil, one cannot escape it", 719) – with the sinister specification that the origin of this 'external' evil is the will of the gods. Eteocles refuses this idea of a life without honour: when describing his alter ego Melanippus, the sovereign had emphasized his respect for this warrior who seemed to be the personification of Modesty (τὸν Αἰσχύνης θρόνον / τιμῶντα, "one who honors the throne of Modesty", 409-10), and his incapacity to commit evil or cowardly deeds (αἰσχρῶν γὰρ ἀργός, μὴ κακὸς δ' εἶναι φιλεῖ, "for he never does a shameful deed, and to be cowardly is not his way", 411) – exactly the qualities that in the above quotation Eteocles claims for his own. The only addition regards the theme of posthumous repute, that is to say the continuation of one's identity in discursive memory. For Eteocles, this 'good repute' (εὐκλεία) goes hand in hand with identity, in that it is the realization of that κλέος ('fame, renown') etymologically inscribed in his own name. Indeed, right from the earliest phases of documented Greek culture, the notion of identity is tightly enclosed in an onomastic and textual dimension.[30] When Eteocles himself exhorts the citizens to defend Thebes, his principal objective is τιμὰς μὴ 'ξαλειφθῆναί ποτε (15), "so as never to let their rites be obliterated", with a metaphor derived from the context of writing[31] and equating the identity of the city with an ideal written compendium of its customs and rituals.[32] This is why in the text the language spoken in the polis is decisive in the determining of identity, to the extent that the invading army is rather awkwardly described as ἑτεροφώνῳ ("of alien speech", 170).[33]

In Eteocles' ethicizing semiotics, where every word must be validated by the right action and where moral justice, on the other hand, is measured against the degree of denotative precision with which reality is de-

[30] The connection of identity with the textual dimension of culture clearly presupposes the notion of 'cultural memory' elaborated by Jan Assmann (1992; specifically on Greek identity: 259ff.).

[31] The verb has a figurative use which however does not except a material or scribal connotation: see Todd 2008: 147 on Lys. 1.48.

[32] Sickinger (1999: 26ff.) focuses on the problem of the writing of Solon's ἄξονες and that of the conservation of the law codes in archaic Athens.

[33] Hutchinson (1985: 72) re-evaluates the problem of a 'foreign' language, arguing that the difference to which the adjective is referring is that between the various Greek dialects.

scribed, the very fact of having been named Eteocles obliges him to fulfil his semantic duty. To be able to call himself truly (ἐτεόν, 'true, authentic', is in this sense a synonym of ὀρθῶς, 'rightly', 829) worthy of the κλέος inscribed in his name, Eteocles must act in accordance with the moral laws legitimating the attribution of κλέος to him. This etymological relevance of proper nouns is not simply a case of interpretative extrapolation, but is evidenced several times in the text, by Eteocles (9; 658), by Amphiaraus (576-7), by the Messenger (536) and by the chorus (678). The most pertinent passage regarding my argument is during the anapaests with which the chorus comments on the news of the victory of Thebes and on the death of Oedipus' sons (829-31):[34]

> οἳ δῆτ' ὀρθῶς κατ' ἐπωνυμίαν
> <ἐτεοκλειεῖς> καὶ πολυνεικεῖς
> ὤλοντ' ἀσεβεῖ διανοίᾳ;
>
> [. . . who have verily perished in a manner appropriate to their names – / with "true glory" and with "much strife" – / because of their impious thoughts?]

Here the different mythical character of the two brothers seems in some measure to have been coded *a priori* in their names, which define their respective symbolic roles (the good brother and the bad brother).[35] Aeschylus' choice of a strongly polarized characterization seems therefore to signify a definite intention to account for the implications of the brothers' names. The various attempts to distribute equally the responsibility for the conflict, or to draw attention, on one pretext or another, to the negative connotations of the Eteocles of the *Seven*, are, in my opinion, completely out of place.[36] In this play Eteocles is the good brother and Polyneices the bad

[34] I follow West (1990a) at l. 830 in printing a conjecture by Petersen slightly modified by Hutchinson (1985: 30). For once the detail of a conjectural reconstruction does not matter as the sense is unconditionally clarified by the symmetry with Polyneices' name.

[35] As he interprets the character of Eteocles as morally culpable, Hutchinson (1985: 186) is forced to play down the etymological significance of his name. In my opinion, Aeschylus' text endeavours to highlight the opposition between the brothers' names as well. It seems opportune to recall the observations made by von Kamptz 1982: 36 (also echoed by Hutchinson), where the scholar associates Eteocles' and Polyneices' names with those of other pairs of brothers (Κάστωρ and Πολυδεύκης; Ποδάρκης and Πρωτεσίλαος) where only the second "einen sprechenden Namen trägt". But even if the opposition identified by von Kamptz makes sense in the abstract, one cannot help noticing that in the *Seven* Eteocles' name is undoubtedly considered as significant as his brother's.

[36] Eteocles' moral quality, already assessed by the play's ancient reception, is high-

one. Eteocles' goodness lies in having shown himself worthy of κλέος by a series of choices, not last of which the fratricidal duel, the result of evaluations made bearing in mind the maximum possible advantage to the community – a rational evaluation, especially when considering that these choices imply breaking a strong cultural taboo.

Naturally the text, like all dramatic texts, throws into relief the various perspectives of the *dramatis personae*, and triggers interaction with opposing, or at least nonaligned visions. It cannot be ignored, for instance, that Eteocles' choices, which I have tried show as rooted in a rationalistic morality (which expresses, in my opinion, the predominating position of the implicit author), are constantly surrounded by an aura of religious and moral misgiving on the part of the chorus. However, when the chorus mentions ἀσεβεῖ διανοίᾳ ("impious design", 831), it only refers to the religious dimension of a choice that has, in any case, determined a crucial and permanent advantage for the polis. If we go backwards in the text from this quotation, we see that the choice of mourning the bodies of the last two Labdacids is one of the two horns of a dilemma, of which the end of the play, as far as we can plausibly fathom,[37] explores only the second option (825-8):

> πότερον χαίρω κἀπολολύξω
> σωτῆρι πόλεως ἀσινείᾳ
> ἢ τοὺς μογεροὺς καὶ δυσδαίμονας
> ἀτέκνους κλαύσω πολεμάρχους . . . ;
>
> [Shall I hail with shouts of joy / the unharmed salvation of the city, / or shall I weep for the wretched, ill-starred, / childless warlords . . . ?]

Notwithstanding the problematic condition of the text, it is not difficult to

lighted, among others, by Lawrence 2007 and Paduano 2013.

[37] The closing scene certainly presents the play's most conspicuous – and most arduous - textual difficulties. In particular, we do not know if the spurious conclusion was simply added to the lament intoned by the chorus over the brothers' bodies or if it replaced another original one. However we interpret the history of the interpolation and its dating (Bergk 1884, Robert 1915, Petersmann 1972, West 1990b, Centanni 1995, Lech 2008, Judet de La Combe 2011 connect it to a fifth-century restaging; Wilamowitz 1914, Page 1934, Dawe 1967, Hutchinson 1985, Barrett 2007, to one of the following century), the prevailing opinion is that the conclusion of the *Seven* is spurious. The consensus of opinion mainly regards ll. 1005-78 (this athetesis, proposed by Scholl, is discussed by Königsbeck 1981: 9), while the expunction of the Antigone and Ismene's entrance at ll. 861-74, proposed by Bergk (1884: 302-5), is then taken up and discussed by Wilamowitz (1903: 436-50 and 1914: 88-93). For a detailed analysis of these subjects see, in particular, Petersmann 1972; Taplin 1977: 169-91; Barrett 2007; Judet de La Combe 2011; a compendium of the different options in Zimmermann 1993: 106-7.

see that the chorus knows that in the first place it may rejoice (χαίρω) for the victory that has left Thebes unconquered (ἀσινείᾳ, 'without damage'). The choice of giving precedence to the funeral rites, the ceremony closing the tragedy, should not, however, mask a crucial detail: in political terms, and more generally from the perspective of correspondence between rational deliberation on choices and 'metaphysical' confirmation of moral qualities, the conclusion of the *Seven* is a positive one, as it demonstrates the transcending of potentially devastating forces towards a prospect of greater political stability and general harmony. The death of the sovereign is therefore an ambiguous event, a point of arrival but also a point of departure. On the one hand, it finds its place in the logic of the ἀρά, which in this way is fulfilled and transcended; on the other, it may be seen as the result of a sequence of choices, and can thus be resemanticized on the plane of κλέος as the affirmation of a particular political vision, destined to yield its fruits during future stability. With his death, Eteocles has provided a concrete example of the fact that the interests of the city must prevail over those of the sovereign and of the γένος, and that ethical and strategic rigour in defence is the most sensible approach, separate from and prevailing over religious prescriptions as well as an irrational and fatalistic submission to fate.

For this reason, the funeral lament that concludes the *Seven Against Thebes* may be better understood in this ambit by using the tools of reception aesthetics,[38] starting at the moment when the chorus declares itself uncertain between joy and sorrow. The choice of mourning has obviously two corollaries: in the first place, it conforms to the aesthetic and structural principles of tragedy, one of whose basic components is the controlled expression of grief;[39] and in the second place, it interrupts the discussion on an element that has however been explicitly evoked: the joy for the regaining of civic peace. This is not in the least a secondary concern, considering that the play, it could be said, starts with the terrified anticipation of destruction, which of course can only determine in the receiver an agonized desire for safety. The fact that the expression of joy for the achievement of this safety is postponed 'to another day' therefore implies, on the basis of the simple enunciative articulation of the dramatic text, that this emotion is marginalized and forced out of the dramatic space towards the theatrical space. In this way, the tragedy stays faithful to its original form, as it

[38] I am referring to the theory and analytical method elaborated by Iser 1972 and 1976.

[39] The connection with grief and mourning is a defining feature of the tragic genre – although of course one neither straightforward nor without problems: Sorkin Rabinowicz 2008: 13; Hall 2010. Bushnell 2005: 1ff. emphasizes (yet another Aeschylean theme) the link between suffering and the forms of understanding.

develops the horn of the dilemma expressing grief, while the joy of the polis for the peace-bringing victory is set free to resound in the mind of the spectator.

We modern readers of the difficult and often dubious text of the *Seven Against Thebes*, are very different from the audience possibly aimed at by Aeschylus when writing this play, but we do know some things about this audience. The *Seven* was written for people who had seen their own city threatened with destruction only a dozen years before, and who had participated in the joy for a victory, determined by strategic ability, against a much bigger army led by a king who was perceived in Greece as impious and proud.[40] Besides being an eyewitness of this invasion, the spectator of the *Seven* is also a citizen for whom a growing prosperity associated with the victory over the Persians coincides with decades of radical social reform, which after forty years had reached full stability. The conclusion of the tragedy should therefore be considered as a sort of understatement – limited by formal, ritual and linguistic conventions – of the celebration of victory. The civic mourning staged by the Thebes of the text emphasizes *e contrario* the satisfaction and joy for this victory, and leaves them suspended, to be enjoyed by the citizens of Athens, foregathered in the theatre of Dionysus.[41]

In support of this hypothesis, there are various arguments, both historic and anthropological. In the first case we can return to the oldest reception of the *Seven* known to us, Gorgias' judgement that the play was "full

[40] For the censuring of Xerxes' overweening impiety during the second Persian war, substantial evidence is provided by Aeschylus himself in his 472 BCE dramatization of the king's defeat (see, for example, the rhesis uttered by Darius' ghost, *Pers.* 800ff., particularly 827-8: τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν φρονημάτων; 831: ὑπερκόμπῳ θράσει). Herodotus 7.35.3 recalls the episode of the whipping given to the sea after the first bridge of ships across the strait was wrecked.

[41] Garvie (2014) suggests that, in spite of the undeniable victory over the foreign invaders at the end of *Septem*, sporadic references (at ll. 742-9; 842-4; 901-5) imply the city's future destruction in a second Argive attack; the contradictions involved in these passages should not be seen as a sign of Aeschylus' defective composition, but as deliberate allusions to other versions of the myth, aiming at an effect of indeterminacy which is not alien to other Aeschylean, as well as Sophoclean and Euripidean endings. Factual contradictions are unquestionable, as shown by the number of deletions proposed to remove some difficulties (references in Garvie 2014: 30-1 and n46): in my opinion, Garvie's sensible and ingenious argument deserves in-depth consideration. As far as my reading of the ending is concerned, anyway, I am inclined to think that thin textual clues such as these could not affect the overall pragmatic effect of mourning (over the last Labdacids' dead bodies) and of implicit relief (for the city's salvation) that I am trying to analyse here.

of Ares".[42] This very opinion was picked up and appropriated by Aeschylus himself, at least in his fictional representation as a character in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1019-22):

ΕΥ. Καὶ τί σὺ δράσας οὕτως αὐτοὺς γενναίους ἐξεδίδαξας;
ΔΙ. Αἰσχύλε, λέξον μηδ' αὐθάδως σεμνυνόμενος χαλέπαινε.
ΑΙ. Δρᾶμα ποήσας Ἄρεως μεστόν. ΔΙ. Ποῖον; ΑΙ. Τοὺς Ἕπτ' ἐπὶ Θήβας·
ὃ θεασάμενος πᾶς ἄν τις ἀνὴρ ἠράσθη δάιος εἶναι.

[Euripides What actions of *yours*, could you please explain, taught the people to be quite so noble? / Dionysus Answer him, Aischylos. Don't keep brooding in arrogant, wilful rage. / Aeschylus I composed a play that was full of Ares. / Dionysus Which one? / Aeschylus The *Seven Against Thebes.* Every man who saw that play performed would have longed for a warlike spirit. (trans. Halliwell 2016)]

If after more than sixty years the *Seven Against Thebes* remained in the eyes of the Athenians the tragedy of military valour and of patriotic defence *par excellence*, we may be sure that Aeschylus' plan of action was interpreted right already in the fifth century not as the illusion of a shadowed mind that guiltily forgets to refer to divine power, but as the exemplary and efficacious advance of a skilful strategist. The *scholion* of John Tzetzes at *Frogs* 1021 is proof of the fact that in the twelfth century this was still the common reading of the play:

γενναίως γὰρ καὶ στρατηγικῶς ἐκεῖ καὶ βασιλικῶς ὁ Ἐτεοκλῆς καὶ στρατηγεῖ καὶ βουλεύεται καὶ κατασκόπους ἐκπέμπει καὶ τάσσει τοὺς λόχους καὶ τἄλλα πάντα ποιεῖ, ὁπόσα ἐχρῆν βασιλέα καὶ στρατηγὸν δεξιώτατον.

[In that play, indeed, Eteocles behaves like a nobleman, a general and a king: he controls the war, makes careful decisions, sends out explorers, positions troops and does all the things that a king and a general of great ability must. (My translation)]

Instead, an anthropological line of reasoning is provided by de Martino's interpretation of the funeral lament (1958). From this perspective, he says, the function of the play's ending may be compared to an analogous function of the phases of the funeral ritual, which leads the community towards

[42] Fr. 24 DK of Gorgias is quoted by Plutarch (*Mor.* 715e) without any information about its original context: indeed, Plutarch adopts Gorgias' expression as a surprising counterexample as part of a discussion comparing the effects of drinking and those of being drunk, and where the example of Aeschylus, who is said always to have written in a state of inebriation, is used as proof of the compatibility between the consumption of wine and the artist's self-control.

the reinforcement of social ties (102-3). In his opinion, in exactly the same way as the funeral lament expresses the possibility of a sharing of grief from which to begin, once again, to reintegrate broken ties and reactivate the web of social exchange, so in the *Seven*, the weeping for Eteocles and Polyneices, culturally codified and so traditionally observed, is the starting point of the restoration of unity threatened as much by war as by metaphysical turmoil (the dynamics of guilt/malediction) that was the underlying cause of everything.

This hypothesis is strengthened by the observation that in semiotic terms the relationship between the moment of the funeral rites and ordinary time, external to this ritual, is the same which exists in the theatre between dramatic simulation and extra-dramatic reality. The only difference is the second degree nature of the rite on the stage, as opposed to a non-theatrical funeral ritual, which takes place 'really', although it is obviously, in semiotic terms, only the first degree enactment of a script.[43]

As de Martino maintains, the suffering that all the participants experience during the accomplishment of such a ritual act is the indispensable stage leading to a feeling of safety able to overcome the "crisi della presenza" – which signifies, in the ambit of the *Seven*, not only the risk of military destruction but also the crisis of meaning provoked by the aporetic conflict between the metaphysical order of the world and the rational basis of ethical values. The order which is regained in the *Seven*, starting from the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, is the harbinger of a more durable joy, as it is founded on new grounds. The political option has been shown able to conquer a primordial fear of metaphysical chaos, by finally rooting traditional military ethics, which had crystallized long before Aeschylus in the epos and the archaic elegy,[44] in a rationally grounded system. Traditional ethical norms emerged from this and were apparently simply confirmed, but they also gained the strength of a univocal and necessary principle, validated by their no longer discretionary application in a unified political system.

Translation by Susan Payne

[43] For the stylization of the Lucanian lament in its various phases, see de Martino 1958: 75ff. The pages 78ff. in particular emphasize how stylised patterns of lamentation are flexible enough to include elements from the occasional context; these elements are embedded in a linguistic frame whose 'protected' nature derives, in the last analysis, from its formally organized structure.

[44] An anthology of texts on Greek military ethics is in Sage 1996. For a correspondence with the perspective of the *Seven*, Callinus 1 (who, for example, at ll. 6-7 anticipates Aesch. *Sept.* 14-6) or Tyrtaeus, 10.13ff. will more than suffice. For a general vision see Campbell and Tritle 2013; Bryant 1996: 27ff. (on the transformation towards hoplite ethics: 90ff.).

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Robert S. Miola*

Curses in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and in Shakespeare's *Richard* Plays

Abstract

Despite differences in theatrical convention and cultural context, Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Richard III* share important similarities: each occurs in a sequence of plays and features a ruler who, initially sure of himself, suffers a crashing downfall and death. Variously represented, curses, that is, callings for supernatural punishment upon people, appear centrally in these plays and structure their unfolding actions. Aeschylus' play presents the fulfillment of Oedipus' curse on his sons, Eteocles and Polyneices. Eteocles' confrontation with the curse both enables its fulfillment and defines his tragedy. Contrarily, characters curse each other in *Richard II*, but they do so ineffectually. In this play God's curse in Genesis structures and defines the action. Margaret's curses appear efficacious in *Richard III* but actually just serve to indicate the potent reality of divine retribution. In Shakespeare's plays confrontation with curses enables their fulfillment and constitutes the rulers' tragedies. Notice of the agency and operation of curses in these three plays reveals the different theologies, dramas, and tragedies they present.

Keywords: Aeschylus; Shakespeare; *Seven Against Thebes*; *Richard II*; *Richard III*; curses

Despite differences in theatrical convention and cultural context, Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Richard III* share important similarities. They all belong to an extended dramatic and historical sequence: the *Seven* is the third part of the trilogy, following *Laius* and *Oedipus*, and preceding the satyr-drama *The Sphinx*, these three largely lost; *Richard II* begins the eight-drama series, generally grouped into two tetralogies, that represents English history as it proceeds through the reigns of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, the three parts of *Henry VI*, and culminates in *Richard III*. Represented actions thus occur in a thick historical context: past events – crimes, murders, wars – crowd a present that exists before a looming, often threatening future. The past is never past: Laius' defiance of Apollo (742-9)[1] and the recalled murders of Woodstock (*RII* 1.2.1) and Rutland (*RI-*

[1] Unless otherwise noted all references to Aeschylus are to Denys Page's edition

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II 1.2.160),[2] for example, intrude upon the present and inflect the future. Incidents radiate backwards and forwards in their effects and significances.

For all their differences *Seven Against Thebes* and the *Richard* plays present similar arcs of action. Like Aeschylus' play, *Richard II* features a ruler who demonstrates his *imperium* through assertion over opponents and ordered pageantry. Eteocles scolds the Chorus for improperly supplicating the gods; he coolly meets the announced threat of the first six warriors at the gates by answering their claims and assigning each a Theban opponent. Richard stages a medieval tournament to adjudicate the dispute between Bolingbroke and Mowbray, then abruptly cancels it. Both rulers face the threat of civil overthrow from a relative, Eteocles' brother Polynices and Richard's cousin Bolingbroke. Both suffer a crashing downfall and death, for which they are partly responsible. *Richard III* also shares some structural commonalities with *Seven Against Thebes*. Both plays feature public lamentations by women, the Chorus of Theban females and the ritualistic mourning of Queen Margaret, Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York. These dramas display on a grand scale the workings of divine retribution against the central character, and both end in military confrontation and the ruler's death. This retribution, of course, occurs in radically different theological contexts: ancient drama depicts the sometimes capricious, sometimes inscrutable actions of the gods, while the later Christian plays illustrate the workings of an omnipotent and just Providence.

Variously represented, curses, that is, callings for supernatural punishment, appear centrally in these dramas and in different ways structure their unfolding actions. Aeschylus' play presents the fulfillment of Oedipus' curse on his sons, Eteocles and Polynices.[3] In *Seven Against Thebes* Oedipus' spoken curse takes the form of a supernatural spirit of vengeance. Early on Eteocles invokes Zeus, Earth, and other deities, including Ara (Curse):

> ὦ Ζεῦ τε καὶ Γῆ καὶ πολισσοῦχοι θεοὶ,
> Ἀρά τ' Ἐρινὺς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής,
> μή μοι πόλιν γε πρυμνόθεν πανώλεθρον
> ἐκθαμνίσητε δηάλωτον Ἑλλάδος·
> (69-72)

(1972; with modernized sigmas and iota subscripts), and all translations from the Greek are mine.

[2] All references to *Richard II* are to Charles R. Forker's Arden edition (2002); to *Richard III*, James R. Siemon's Arden edition (2009).

[3] On curses in antiquity and in this play see Watson (1991) and Stehle (2005). Before Aeschylus this curse appeared in the *Thebaid*, where, Athenaeus reports, Oedipus got angry that his father's treasures were set beside him at table (West 2003: 44-5); a scholiast on Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* provides a variant version (West 2003: 46-7), as does this play itself (1372ff.).

[O Zeus and Earth and you gods dwelling the city, O Curse and mighty Fury of my father, do not let my city be captured by its enemies, do not root it out utterly from Greece in total destruction!]

Eteocles here imagines his father's spoken curse as a supernatural power closely associated with the Erinyes.[4] Though the play does not specify the exact cause of Oedipus' curse, it suggests the content right before the terrible fulfillment. Hearing that his brother attacks at the Seventh Gate, Eteocles exclaims:

ὦ θεομανές τε καὶ θεῶν μέγα στύγος,
ὦ πανδάκρυτον ἁμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος:
ὤμοι, πατρὸς δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι.
(653-5)

[O my family, god-maddened and greatly hated by the gods full of tears, the whole house of Oedipus! Alas, the curse of my father is truly now fulfilled.]

His father's curse, he realizes, will result in fraternal battle and death.

After the Chorus warns against the shedding of fraternal blood, Eteocles reveals exactly what the Curse is doing and saying to him in the present:

φίλου γὰρ ἐχθρά μοι πατρὸς †τελεῖ† ἀρὰ
ξηροῖς ἀκλαύτοις ὄμμασιν προσιζάνει
λέγουσα κέρδος πρότερον ὑστέρου μόρου.
(695-7)[5]

[Yes, but the hateful, completed Curse of a loved father sits close by me with dry, tearless eyes, speaking of gain first, death after.]

Personified, the unnatural, hate-filled Curse sits close to its victim without pity, promising the κέρδος ("gain") of honour in battle, driving him to death. Similarly, the Chorus sees a δαίμων (705, "god, spirit") close by, seething (708, νῦν δ' ἔτι ζεῖ). The Curse is or evokes an active, malignant,

[4] Hutchinson (1985: 53, 163) notes that there was an Athenian temple to Ara (Curse) and a cult in Sparta and Thera devoted to Oedipus' and Laius' Erinyes. Sommerstein (2009: 407) observes that in Homer, "the Erinyes appear most frequently as the divine embodiments of a curse, especially the curse of a wronged parent (*Iliad* 9.454, 571; 21.412; *Odyssey* 2.135; 11.280)". In *Eumenides* Aeschylus specifically identifies the Curse with the Furies: the Erinyes say that they are the eternal children of Night and that "Curses" is their name in the houses below the earth (416-17).

[5] R. P. Winnington-Ingram (1983: 37) comments: "Whose eyes are dry? Does the Curse haunt the dry eyes of Eteocles or haunt him with dry eyes? It does not matter, because at this point the line of distinction between the Curse and the mind of Eteocles is hard to draw, because the Curse is working on him and in him".

supernatural spirit of destruction that seeks blood. Eteocles answers:

> ἐξέζεσεν γὰρ Οἰδίπου κατεύγματα·
> ἄγαν δ' ἀληθεῖς ἐνυπνίων φαντασμάτων
> ὄψεις, πατρῴων χρημάτων δατήριοι.
> (709-11)
>
> [Yes, for the Curse of Oedipus seethes: too true the prophesies of those dream-visions dividing our father's property.]

The Curse causes φαντάσματα, dreams or ghostly visions of its fulfillment, here specified as the division of patrimony.

The Second Stasimon (720-33) gathers up these hints and half-guesses into more coherent exposition. The first strophe depicts again the Curse as a "god unlike other gods" (721, θεὸν οὐ θεοῖς ὁμοίαν), a terrible supernatural spirit of vengeance. It virtually identifies the spoken curse with the Erinys who fulfills it (723, πατρὸς εὐκταίαν Ἐρινύν, "the Fury invoked by a father"). The first antistrophe reveals some specifics of the curse as originally pronounced, namely the prediction that a "Scythian stranger" (727-8, ξένος . . . Σκυθῶν) will divide Oedipus' possessions. To its horror the Chorus realizes that the stranger is "savage-hearted Iron" (730, ὠμόφρων σίδαρος), that is, the sword that will kill both sons and give to each "as much land as is given to the dead" (732, ὁπόσαν καὶ φθιμένους ἐγκατέχειν), in other words, a grave (cf. 785-91). Oedipus' curse is here revealed as the mainspring of the action, the keystone to its arching structure, the beginning and end of the story the play relates. The spoken word becomes terribly incarnate in the Furies that stalk the Labdacid house down through the generations. The play does not tell the story of a political invasion, or of a heroic Greek polis resisting the barbarians at the gate, as Eteocles and the Chorus interpret the action early on; instead it tells the tale of Eteocles' own tragedy, linked backwards in an unbreakable and fateful chain of curses to the tragedies of his father Oedipus and his grandfather Laius, and forwards to that of his sister Antigone. Theban history is not only national and political but also familial and personal.

Unlike *Seven against Thebes*, *Richard II* does not present the operation of supernatural curses working their way through the generations and erupting with terrifying force. Twice in the play characters actually pronounce specific curses that are named and recognized as such by others onstage, but the curses are ineffectual. Thinking himself betrayed by the Earl of Wiltshire, Bushy, Bagot, and Green, Richard proclaims, "Terrible hell / Make war upon their spotted souls for this!" (3.2.133-4). Scroop tells him that three of these are already dead: "uncurse their souls" (137); "Those whom you curse / Have felt the worse of death's destroying wound"

(138-9). Misperceiving yet again the action unfolding around him, Richard's curse is cancelled as he speaks it. In 3.4, a classic case of blaming the messenger, the Queen curses the Gardener for telling her the news of Bolingbroke's rise and Richard's fall: "Gard'ner, for telling me these news of woe, / Pray God the plants thou graft'st may never grow" (100-1). But the Gardener empties the malediction of all power by responding selflessly and sympathetically: "Poor Queen, so that thy state might be no worse, / I would my skill were subject to thy curse" (102-3). He then disappears from the play. Adjuring hell and then heaven, these characters call down supernatural retribution for perceived injuries, but the action moves on to deny or evacuate the summonses. Unlike Oedipus' curse, terribly and supernaturally potent, these particular curses come to nothing.

Though not efficacious in themselves, the uttered curses in *Richard II* point to larger dramatic and theological realities because they resound in a general discourse of grim premonition and prophecy. Mowbray fears that the "King shall rue" (1.3.205) his support of Bolingbroke. As a "prophet new inspired" (2.1.31), Gaunt predicts that the king's "rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last" (33). An uneasy foreboding pervades the entire play: York knows that the events of "bad courses . . . can never fall out good" (2.1.213-14); Northumberland and Ross foresee "the very wrack we must suffer" (2.1.267), just as does the queen, "Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune's womb, / Is coming towards me" (2.2.10-11). Portents signal impending disaster. The Welsh captain tells of withered bay trees, meteors frighting the fixed stars of heaven, a bloody moon, and "lean-looked prophets" whispering of "fearful change" (2.4.8-11). Carlisle delivers a formal prophecy of "Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny" (4.1.143) for the present age and "children yet unborn" (322).

The discourse of dire premonition and prophecy that pervades the play derives not from the capacity of individuals to pronounce curses but from their underlying confidence in moral order, in God's ability to reward and punish, or curse, if you will. In 3.4, the Gardener, "old Adam's likeness" (72), talks of Richard's deposition and hears the queen's rebuke: "What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee / To make a second fall of cursed man?" (75-6). The queen sees Richard's deposition as both an enactment of the original sin in Eden and as an example of its consequence, the fall from grace of "cursed man". She recalls God's heavy sentence, the curse on earth and humanity, particularly Genesis 4:11-12: "thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thine hand. When thou shalt till the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength" (Geneva Bible 1599). Later Carlisle too recalls this curse when he predicts the future calamities arising from civil war, "the woefullest division" "That ever fell upon the cursed earth" (4.1.147-8). These allu-

sions to Genesis portray the play as reenacting both the fall and its consequence, the curse of God on sinful humanity. "In a general sense", notes Maveety (1973: 190), the Biblical "curse against birth and generation applies also to the English nation who for almost a century bear children to inherit a land cursed by the actions described in this play".[6] The play depicts both the fall and the fallen world. The similarity to (and difference from) *Septem* thus becomes clear: in both plays the past is not really past but uncannily present and future, as both playwrights explore the sacred triumph of synchronic over diachronic time; the divinely executed curses of ancient fathers, however, here get replaced by God's curse upon the mythological father of all humanity.

As regards efficacious cursing, *Richard III* appears to contrast with *Richard II*. "Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?", Queen Margaret asks early on, "Why then, give way dull clouds to my quick curses" (1.3.194-5). The action of the play seems to answer her question in the affirmative, as a grim series of victims all ascribe their doom to Margaret's curses.[7] In the company of Rivers and Vaughan, the condemned Gray reflects, "Now Margaret's curse is fall'n upon our heads" (3.3.14). Before his execution Hastings similarly laments, "O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse / Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head" (3.4.91-2). Going to his death Buckingham repeats the almost formulaic recognition: "Now Margaret's curse is fallen upon my head" (5.1.25).[8] When her heart is split with sorrow as Margaret prophesied, Queen Elizabeth begs her former foe to teach her to curse: "O thou, well skilled in curses, stay awhile, / And teach me how to curse mine enemies" (4.4.116-17). Lancasters and Yorks, including notably the Duchess of York, finally unite in cursing their common enemy Richard III, who dies terribly on the battlefield. In this play uttered curses appear to have power and come to bloody fulfillment in the course of the action.

These appearances notwithstanding, Margaret's curses are not really efficacious in themselves but only point to a larger theological reality.[9]

[6] Hannibal Hamlin (2013: 140) has also added that a cluster of complementary allusions to Psalm 137 "represents England itself as fallen, exiled from its original happy state, as Jerusalem was after its fall, when it was mourned by Jeremiah and the Psalmist in exile following the Babylonian conquest".

[7] Productions have emphasized this point: in Sam Mendes's 1992 production "Cherry Morris as Margaret was allowed to reappear hauntingly as each of Richard's victims went off to his death" (Jowett 2000: 48). In the *Richard III* of *The Hollow Crown* series (2016), Sophie Okonedo's wonderfully eerie Queen Margaret used a mirror to curse her victims and presided over the ghostly visitations in Act 5

[8] I quote the Folio version of the line; Siemon prints the Quarto version, "Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy on my neck".

[9] Siemon (2009: 21) points out her "glaring errors": Queen Elizabeth does not end childless, Richard's most fearful dream is not a "hell of ugly devils" (1.3.226), and he

In context, they appear with Margaret's prayers, her invocations to God for justice and retribution. Margaret, for example, prays that Elizabeth's small joy in being queen be lessened, "God, I beseech thee!" (1.3.110); that Clarence's perjury be punished, "Which God revenge" (1.3.136); that guilty Yorks suffer early deaths: "God, I pray Him, / That none of you may live his natural age, / But by some unlooked accident cut off" (1.3.211-13). She does not invoke infernal devils to fulfill her maledictions but looks to a just, omniscient God to right earthly wrong: "O God, that seest it, do not suffer it; / As it is won with blood, lost be it so" (1.3.270-71). Later, hearing the laments of her enemies, she thanks this deity: "O upright, just, and true-disposing God, / How I do thank thee" (4.4.55-6). All of Margaret's victims, furthermore, explicitly recognize that God's power, not some dark curse, is the true efficient cause in their fates. En route to execution Rivers realizes that Margaret's curses are only obverse expressions of her prayers and that God disposes all.

> Then cursed she Richard; then cursed she Buckingham;
> Then cursed she Hastings. O, remember, God,
> To hear her prayer for them, as now for us.
> (3.3.17-19)

Hastings, similarly, attributes his fate to his own failure to reverence properly this deity:

> O momentary grace of mortal men,
> Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
> Who builds his hopes in air of your good looks
> Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
> Ready with every nod to tumble down
> Into the fatal bowels of the deep.
> (3.4.95-100)

Buckingham asked for divine retribution when he failed to reverence the Queen and her house, "God punish me" . . . "This do I beg of God, / When I am cold in love to you or yours" (2.1.34, 40-1); on his way to execution he recognizes the fulfillment of that prayer:

> This is the day which, in King Edward's time,
> I wished might fall on me when I was found
> False to his children or his wife's allies.
> . . .
> That high All-Seer which I dallied with

justly observes, "Her foresight is limited to commonplace notions of divine retributive justice and earthly mutability".

Hath turned my feigned prayer on my head.
(5.1.13-15, 20-1)

As in *Richard II* curses in *Richard III* reveal the underlying moral order and the active presence of a just God who punishes the wicked.[10]

Each ruler's response to the curses in his play creates and defines his tragedy. When Eteocles climactically realizes that the curse of his father drives him to destined battle with his brother, he bitterly assents to his own destruction and that of his house:

ἐπεὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα κάρτ᾽ ἐπισπέρχει θεός,
ἴτω κατ᾽ οὖρον, κῦμα Κωκυτοῦ λαχόν,
Φοίβῳ στυγηθὲν πᾶν τὸ Λαΐου γένος.
(689-91)

[Since the god is indeed driving this matter on, let it go to ruin before the wind, consigned to the waves of Cocytus, all the house of Laius, hated by Phoebus.]

The allusion to Apollo recalls Laius' original violation of his oracle and the subsequent curse on the family. Eteocles' realization abruptly annihilates his previous construction of the world and himself. That ordered universe wherein humans can propitiate gods and count on their favor in return suddenly appears as a mysterious and malevolent world of past crimes and the present Fury, lurking, implacable, μελάναιγις (699, "with black aegis or storm"). Eteocles' own identity as the individual self-appointed high priest of ritual likewise changes to that of a voiceless and powerless descendant of Laius, his fate sealed by Phoebus Apollo's hatred before he was even born. These realizations lead Eteocles to abandon his previous theodicy and to despair:

θεοῖς μὲν ἤδη πως παρημελήμεθα,
χάρις δ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἡμῶν ὀλομένων θαυμάζεται;[11]
τί οὖν ἔτ᾽ ἂν σαίνοιμεν ὀλέθριον μόρον;
(702-4)

[We are already, it seems, abandoned by the gods, and so can an offering from any of us doomed mortals be honoured? Why then should we still cringe before our fated death?]

[10] The combatants in *Septem* invoke another kind of underlying moral order, *Dike*, or "Justice," who appears personified as a portent on Polynices' shield with a promise to restore him to home and city (644-8); Eteocles, however, pointedly denies *Dike*'s involvement with his brother's cause (658-73); see Orwin (1980).

[11] I here depart from Page's text to follow Hutchinson (1985) and Sommerstein (2009) in reading line 703 as a question.

The particle πως ("it seems"), Hutchinson comments, "is bitter", and the aorist middle participle ὀλομένων ("having been destroyed") asserts powerfully his and all humanity's mortal condition, already destroyed, always dying, already doomed. The verb σαίνοιμεν ("we cringe") echoes the scout's contemptuous use earlier (383, σαίνειν μόρον) and has its usual force of cowering or fawning like a dog. The phrase ὀλέθριον μόρον ("fated death") recalls Homer's baleful ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ (*Il.* 19.294, 409, "day of doom") and conveys the full etymological force of μόρον, from μείρομαι ("receive as one's portion") and related to μοῖρα ("one's part, also the dread goddess of Fate"). This realization constitutes the tragic recognition (*anagnorisis*) and reversal (*peripeteia*) of the play as Aristotle later defined the terms: ἀναγνώρισις δέ, ὥσπερ καὶ τοὔνομα σημαίνει, ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν μεταβολή, ἢ εἰς φιλίαν ἢ ἔχθραν (*Poetics*, 1452a, "Recognition, as the very name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading to friendship or to enmity", Halliwell 1987); Ἔστι δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολή (1452a, "Reversal is a change to the opposite direction of events", Halliwell 1987). Eteocles used to believe in a comprehensible, rational, and reciprocal connection between piety and prosperity: πόλις γὰρ εὖ πράσσουσα δαίμονας τίει (*Sept.* 77, "when a city is prosperous, it honors its gods"); ἀλλ' οὖν θεοὺς / τοὺς τῆς ἁλούσης πόλεος ἐκλείπειν λόγος (217-18, "but it is said that the gods abandon a city that has been taken"). He discovers that he is doomed by gods who are actually enemies or, worse yet, indifferent to the piety of mortal men and women.

Resisting all entreaty, protector of the city to the last, grimly marching to the fated confrontation, Eteocles certainly appears to be a pitiable victim of the curse. But he is also responsible for his own fate, the play insists to our discomfort and unease. Rash and culpable, Eteocles, in fact, enacts the crime that originally caused the curse, disobedience of divine command (745-6, Ἀπόλλωνος εὖτε Λάιος / βίᾳ). The word signifying Laius' defiance of Apollo (βίᾳ, "by violence"), twice recurs to describe Polynices as mighty (577, 641), thus linking lexically the first and third generations, the past crime of Laius and the future one of Eteocles against his brother. Helen H. Bacon (1964: 30-1, 36) has observed other verbal links: Laius' counsels are ἄπιστοι (842, "defiant, disobedient") and this word echoes twice in the Choral kommos for the dead brothers (846, 876); images of sharpened steel describe Apollo's curse to Laius (844, θέσφατ' οὐκ ἀμβλύνεται, "oracles do not lose their edge"), Oedipus' curse (944, θηκτὸς σίδαρος, "sharpened iron"), and Eteocles himself (715, τεθηγμένον τοί μ' οὐκ ἀπαμβλυνεῖς λόγῳ, "I am sharpened and shall not be blunted by your words"). These images point to the "Scythian stranger" (727-8, ξένος . . . Σκυθῶν), i.e, the sword that will be both the physical embodiment of the curse and its executor.

The Chorus calls attention to the divine prohibition against shedding one's own blood and warns Eteocles of the consequences – οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος (682, "there is no old age to that pollution"). They accuse him of blood-lust:

> τί μέμονας, τέκνον; μή τί σε θυμοπλη-
> θὴς δορίμαργος ἄτα φερέτω· κακοῦ δ'
> ἔκβαλ' ἔρωτος ἀρχάν.
> (686-8)
>
> [Why do you rush furiously on, child? Do not let yourself be swept away by this spear-mad blindness that swells your heart. Cast away the first stirrings of this evil lust!]

The young women reverse their former subordinate position and address the king as τέκνον ("child"), condemning the heart-filling passion that will bring evil. They censure his destructive ἔρως, the ὠμοδακής . . . ἵμερος (692, "fiercely gnawing desire") that provokes the shedding "of unlawful blood" (694, αἵματος οὐ θεμιστοῦ). Ignoring all warning, giving way to irrational impulse, Eteocles becomes in Hutchinson's words, a "horribly distorted" (1985: 148) version of the self-possessed commander that opened the play. He must know that taking arms against his brother will inevitably lead to his own destruction. "The inextricability of the brothers' fates", Isabelle Torrance (2014: 62) notes, "is stressed linguistically through compounds prefixed by auto- 'self' and references to the fratricide as *autoktonia* 'suicide' (681, 734-5, 805, 850)". Eteocles' recognition of the curse results only in a theology of "fatalism and despair" (Hutchinson 1985: xxxviii) that enables his own willful violation and self-destruction. Nothing matters anymore. Θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά (719, "When the gods send evils, no one can escape them"), says Eteocles and then leaves the stage. Taplin (1977: 165) pointedly comments: "Everything that is at stake in *Seven* 677-719 will be decided by a stage action, Eteocles' exit. The act itself is held up and examined; then in the end, Eteocles breaks the suspense . . . He goes; and in his going he fulfills the curse. For the audience, he is dead". Eteocles is both victim of the curse and its enactor.

Richard II's response to God's curse likewise enables and structures his tragedy as he too experiences a devastating recognition and reversal. Believing himself to be the divinely appointed king Carlisle describes, "the figure of God's majesty, / His captain, steward, deputy elect, / Anointed, crowned, planted many years" (4.1.126-8), Richard initially thinks himself invulnerable:

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;

The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.
(3.2.54-7)

Bolingbroke's rise to power shatters this conception of himself and his place in Providential order. The confrontation with Bolingbroke at Flint Castle in the middle of the play (3.3) literally and figuratively depicts Richard's vertiginous fall and the collapse of his theodicy. From high on the walls Richard haughtily proclaims, "God omnipotent / Is mustering in His clouds on our behalf / Armies of pestilence" (85-8). But then he must descend to face the victorious rebel on stage: "Down, down I come like glist'ring Phaëthon, / Wanting the manage of unruly jades" (178-9).[12] In the moving deposition scene that follows, the divinely-anointed king renounces all the accoutrements of power and privilege:

I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,
The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duteous oaths.
All pomp and majesty I do forswear.
(4.1.204-11)

Richard here discovers that God will not protect him from Bolingbroke and the rebels, that he is flesh and blood.

After the deposition scene, Richard too appears to be a victim of the curse in his play, a suffering human man in the hostile, fallen world. Remarkably, he begins to claim audience sympathy. He bids moving farewell to the Queen "So two together, weeping, make one woe. / Weep thou for me in France, I for thee here" (5.1.86-7). In his last scene, Richard speaks an extraordinary final soliloquy, markedly different from all earlier utterance, wherein he sees his kingship as a role and recognizes his common humanity:

Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented. Sometimes am I king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am.
(5.5.31-4)

[12] Richard's dramatic descent, depicted in the staging as well as the imagery, echoes Eteocles' vertiginous fall from protector of the polis to curse-driven fratricide.

Instead of the earlier ornate and pompous rhetoric, simplicity and repetition express the fundamental paradoxes of human existence: we desire a happiness that we can never attain; our life must end in death; only death can free us from pain and desire.

> Nor I nor any man that but man is
> With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased
> With being nothing.
> (39-41)

Richard's new rhetorical style signals new insight into himself and the world; clearly and concisely he explains his plight: "I wasted time, and now doth Time waste me" (49). The brutally simple inversion and antithesis summarizes Richard's life and death without extenuation and excuse; whatever his faults, the poignant eloquence of the close claims a measure of respect and sympathy never evoked by Eteocles or Richard III. At least momentarily Richard II seems victim of division in the fallen, cursed world. And, at the last, he responds bravely to his murderers, fighting hard, slaying two men before his own end.

But despite this victimization and these moments of self-understanding and insight, Richard, the play insists, is also deeply responsible for his fate. Scattered moments of wistful regret never rise to true contrition and the king never truly acknowledges his own role in his downfall and the wide scope of his misdeeds. He acknowledges generally his "weaved-up follies" (4.1.229) but refuses to hear his wrongs enumerated; he never regrets or even remembers the blank charters, the theft of Gaunt's lands, the waste of resources, the playing of unworthy favorites, the devastation on the kingdom entrusted to him. His sorrow is all for himself, and in the lengthy recounting of his own woes he says not one word about the suffering he inflicted upon his people. Instead of seeing himself as a true son of Adam, negligent in the garden, as the Gardener does, Richard shatters the looking glass (4.1.288).

Self-loving and aspiring, a rash and ambitious prince, Richard II commits the original sin of pride that caused the divine curse on sinful humanity in the first place. Like Eve, who fell for the serpent's false promise, "Ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5), Richard also displays divine pretension and aspiration: repeatedly he identifies himself with Jesus Christ.[13] Thinking

[13] Forker (2002: 394) comments: "The concept of the martyr-king, especially the analogy of Richard to Christ, is notably absent from Holinshed, Hall, Froissart, and Daniel, whereas the anti-Lancastrian French chroniclers emphasize the parallel". See also Streete (2009: 162-99). Productions have long emphasized Richard's self-identification with Christ for various purposes. Edwin Booth, remarkably, took Richard at his word and "clothed the character in his mind with the features of the accepted por-

that his favorites have made peace with Bolingbroke, he exclaims: "Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas!" (3.2.132). In his own mind he even surpasses Christ in the drama of disloyalty: infidelity to him is "thrice worse" than betrayal of Christ to Crucifixion. Later, he again portrays his plight as far worse than that suffered by Christ:

> Did they not sometime cry, "All hail" to me?
> So Judas did to Christ, but He in twelve
> Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.
> (4.1.170-2)

Christ had twelve apostles who remained loyal but Richard has none. Christ faced one Pilate who refused to take responsibility but Richard faces many:

> Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,
> Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
> Have here delivered me to my sour cross,
> And water cannot wash away your sin.
> (4.1.239-42)

Repeatedly portraying himself as Christ, even as surpassing Christ in his Passion, Richard proves himself a son of Adam in the fallen world.[14] In his divine pretension he repeatedly commits the original sin of pride that incurred the Father's curse in Eden, that curse undone by Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

traits of Christ, and finally concluded to adopt them as being best suited to the person of the unhappy king" (Booth Grossman 1894: 7). Most others have sought to exploit the yawning gap between Richard's delusions and the sad reality. Ben Whishaw's pompous Richard rode to his deposition on a white steed in white garments, and met his death in a Crucifixion loin-cloth (*The Hollow Crown*, dir. Rupert Goold, 2012). A self-dramatizing David Tennant, bare-footed, clothed in flowing, white robe, and adorned with long hair and a cross on his chest, surrendered his crown to Bolingbroke (RSC, dir. Gregory Doran, 2013).

[14] Richard's earlier identification with Phaëthon (3.3.178-9) also ironically reveals this pride, as allegorical traditions interpreted this classical story as a warning against pretention, according to H. David Brumble (1998: 268): "Fulgentius saw Phaethon as one who fell for 'aspiring' (*Mythologies*: 1.16); Dante compared proud churchmen to Phaethon (*Letters*: 11.4, 5-8; see Pépin 1970: 112-13); Lydgate wrote of Phaethon's 'presumpsion' (*Reson and Sensuallyte*: 4206; see also Caxton, *Ovid*: comment on book 2). . . . Berchorius saw the story as showing that 'virtue is in the mean' (*Ovidius Moralizatus*: 154). *Ovide Moralisé* (2.689-730) and Berchorius (*Ovidius Moralizatus*: 160) treat Phaethon as a type of proud aspiring Lucifer and his revolt in heaven. . . . Sandys' comment is in the same tradition: "This fable to the life presents a rash and ambitious Prince, inflamed with desire of glory and dominion" (*Ovid*: 106; see also Golding, 'Epistle': 75)".

Richard III's mocking response to the curses in his play likewise creates and defines his tragedy. He cuts off Margaret's long and formal malediction by flippantly substituting her name for the climactic pronouncement of his own (1.3.232). He ironically asks God's pardon for those who have done Clarence harm, enjoying his little private joke, "For had I cursed now, I had cursed myself" (1.3.318). He ridicules his mother's prayer that God instill virtues in him, "Amen, [*rising; aside*] and make me die a good old man. / That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing" (2.2.109-10), and he stonily ignores her later curse (4.4.184ff.). His insistent mockery approaches blasphemy when he congratulates himself on triumphing over the Almighty in wooing Lady Anne: "Having God, her conscience and these bars against me, / And I, no friends to back my suit withal / But the plain devil and dissembling looks" (1.2.237-9). Theatrically playing the innocent, he casually takes the name of the Lord in vain: "I would to God my heart were flint, like Edward's" (1.3.139); "I thank my God for my humility" (2.1.73). Richard's insistent mockery, blasphemous impostures, and blatant disregard for the Providential order that others in the play recognize too late come to a climax in the charade at Baynard's Castle (3.7). Staging the scene with Buckingham, Richard enters aloft with two bishops, prayer-book in hand, posing as the pious, reluctant, and humble Christian prince in order to gain the crown.

God, however, will not be mocked in this play, and Richard, both like and unlike the other rulers, experiences a devastating recognition and reversal. After stealing the crown, he becomes haunted by past prophecies: Henry VI's prediction "that Richmond should be king" (4.2.95), and the Irish bard's saying that Richard "should not live long" after seeing Richmond (4.2.105). Eleven ghosts of his victims climactically and chronologically appear on stage to curse him and bless Richmond.[15] The final specter, Buckingham, reads Richard's life story and the historical action of the drama as a morality play: "God and good angels fight on Richmond's side, / And Richard falls in height of all his pride" (5.3.175-6). Richard discovers that all his secret sins are precisely numbered, that the world is manifestly not his to bustle in. He wakes, "Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds! / Have mercy, Jesu" (5.3.177-8). The calling upon Christ for mercy contrasts with all his other false prayers and invocations, and leads to a fleeting moment of self-revelation that precisely recalls his initial blithe resolution to "prove a villain" (1.1.30):

[15] The common tendency in criticism and production to portray the apparitions as mere figments of Richard's guilty imagination nullifies their role as supernatural participants in a larger moral order. See, for example, the portrayal in Al Pacino's otherwise quite brilliant documentary, *Looking for Richard* (1996).

Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O, no. Alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain.
(5.3.187-91)

Richard here momentarily recognizes exactly what he has achieved and what he has become. The arrogant bravado gives way to guilt, "I shall despair" (200), and a pathetic complaint, "There is no creature loves me, / And if I die, no soul will pity me" (200-1). The recognition and reversal are short-lived, however; Richard recovers, refuses to repent, and marches off to rally the troops against Richmond.

Though they live in very different worlds, Eteocles, Richard II, and Richard III all experience shattering confrontations with curses. In so doing, each enacts the original violations that occasioned the curses and each suffers terribly for that action. All the rulers suffer from fundamental misunderstandings about themselves and their worlds, specifically about their relations with the divine, and their places in the great chain of events stretching backwards into the past and forwards into the future. This chain comprises a drama of history unseen and unimagined by the royal actors, one that features for Eteocles the malevolent malediction of the Labdacid house, for Richard II God's curse on all sons of Adam, and for Richard III, God's punishment on those who blaspheme and take his name in vain. In the first two plays there is no satisfying closure after the deaths of the principals, and both *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* end with a distinct sense of incompletion. The textual interpolation that concludes the *Seven* reifies this incompletion into an added scene forecasting the subsequent tragedy of Antigone and her struggle to bury Polynices. The victorious Bolingbroke says in his last speech that his "soul is full of woe" (5.6.45) and he decides to go to the Holy Land "to wash this blood off from my guilty hand" (50), an action that begins *I Henry IV*. Evocations of the primal fratricide, Cain's killing of Abel, however, complete the patterns of biblical imagery in this play and undercut this intended expiation. At the outset of *Richard II* Bolingbroke declares that Woodstock's blood, "like sacrificing Abel's, cries / Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth / To me for justice and rough chastisement" (1.1.104-6). Here he usurps God's role as the revenger of wrongs, just as he does after Richard's murder when he pronounces God's curse on Exton: "With Cain go wander thorough shades of night, / And never show thy head by day nor light" (5.6.43-4). Bolingbroke's curse swiftly and ironically redounds upon himself, as he in this very scene confesses a gnawing fear, worry, guilt, and need for expiation.

The curser utters God's curse and is himself cursed.

The curses and the tragedies of *Seven Against Thebes* and *Richard II* continue into the futures that unfold outside the limits of their plays. Only *Richard III* ends with a sense of completion, though some have read the closure as unstable and over-determined.[16] And yet, Richmond prays before battle, gives thanks to God, and finally proclaims, "The bloody dog is dead" (5.5.2), precisely echoing Margaret's earlier curse and prayer: "dear God I pray, / That I may live and say. 'The dog is dead'". This verbal iteration auditorily appears to confirm the potency of Margaret's curses and to cast her as a latter-day version of Ara or the Erinys. But, of course, that flickering image, like so many from the classical pantheon, fades into the larger sweep of Christian history and Providential order. These forces may work toward expiation of sin or the curses may become ironically fulfilled in the inauguration of the Tudor regime.

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[16] In Bill Alexander's 1984 RSC staging, "the absence of a fair fight, and the spectacularly theatrical slaughter of the praying figure by a Darth Vader-like Richmond, with full orchestral underscoring, sustained this production's increasing ambiguity" (Day 2002: 217). Jowett (2000: 70) quotes Wilbur Sanders' description of Richmond's final speech as "a pious shell and a hard core of prudential self-interest" (1968: 73), and notes its portrayal in Bogdanov's production (1988) as a "smooth exercise in public relations, scarcely ruffled by the darkly ambiguous and repeated injunction, 'Let them not live'". Siemon (2009: 115) observes, "recent productions generally reject England's purgation and Richmond's innocence".

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Elena Pellone and David Schalkwyk*

"Breath of Kings": Political and Theatrical Power in *Richard II*

Abstract

This essay challenges the way in which *Richard II* has been perceived and portrayed in recent films and theatrical adaptations and in literary criticism since Coleridge. It bases its research on experimental productions by Anərkē Shakespeare, using original practice techniques without a director, relying solely on the text rather than external conceptual impositions. Scrutinising Richard's language as both an embodiment of performance, and embodied in performance, obviates received caricatures of Richard as weak, effeminate, gay, and capricious. It uses J.L. Austin's analysis of perlocutionary and illocutionary performatives to show the degree to which Richard's illocutionary fragility, as he loses political power at a local level, develops a perlocutionary strength in which he demonstrates unexpected performative capacities. It argues that political power and theatrical power in the play are inversely proportional to each other. Consequently, as Richard gains theatrical power he achieves a far greater political force beyond the confines of the play. In the only soliloquy, Richard appeals directly to a universal need to accept our common state of nothingness: "whate'er I be, / Nor I nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased / With being nothing". Revealing only then that we can be something.

Keywords: Theatrical power; political power; J.L. Austin; perlocutionary and illocutionary acts; performatives; stereotypes; directorless; *Richard II*; Shakespeare; deposition; hollow crown; nothing; chiasmus, grief

What do we know of Shakespeare's King *Richard II*? Are we acquainted with him as a poetic king – a capricious, gay, effeminate, ineffectual ruler (as if being gay and effeminate equates to being weak), who is deposed by the hirsute and manly Bolingbroke?[1] We are familiar with the Royal Shake-

[1] The *Guardian* theatre critic, Michael Billington, confirms this tendency in an article that claims that John Barton's use of actors in alternating the roles works against the stereotype: "John Barton in 1973 had the brilliant idea of getting Ian Richardson and Richard Pasco to alternate as Richard and Bolingbroke: *in place of the usual conflict be-*

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speare Company (RSC) David Tennent's near caricature of a homosexual, childlike and ethereal Richard, his gay councillors whispering wormtongue in his ear (Doran 2014). We are struck by Ben Wishaw's reincarnation of Michael Jackson, complete with pet monkey,[2] as the otherworldy, Christlike figure of poetic melancholy and homosexual longings, crucified in the brutal world of a masculine politics (Goold et al. 2012). We remember Fiona Shaw's angelic Richard, delicate, teary and in love with Bolingbroke (Goold, Richard Eyre and Thea Sharrock 2012).

But when we turn our attention to the text, what remain of these inherited archetypes? Can we really call Richard capricious? And what of his supposed homosexuality in the face of the "moving farewell" with his wife, in shared lines and rhyming couplets.[3] Is Richard, who has ruled for twenty-two years at the time of his deposition (June 1377 to September 1399), really an ineffectual king?[4]

These questions stem from a series of experimental performances of *Richard II* by Anərkē Shakespeare, working without a director, in a democratic ensemble, relying solely on the text rather than external conceptual impositions. Rather than being arbitrarily capricious[5] we discover Rich-

tween a winsome dandy and a burly pragmatist, one suddenly got a study of parallel misfortune" (emphasis added). This doesn't prevent Billington from endorsing Rupert Goold's "stunning" 2012 *Richard* (with Ben Wishaw as a thoroughly gay, effete Richard) as "best of all" (2014). See also *The Guardian* theatre blog: "Fragility has very much been the key to the Richards of our day, such as Eddie Redmayne's performance at the Donmar in 2011. Redmayne's king was painfully young and gauche". https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2013/jan/24/richard-ii-actors-david-tennant (Accessed 18 October 2018).

[2] "Wanted to do a Michael Jackson themed RII and the monkey (King Richard had a pet monkey) is a tribute to that": Goold 2012.

[3] This is an unhistorical invention, Richard being then married to the French king's daughter Isabel who was seven. Saccio 1977: 22.

[4] A discussion of Mark Rylance's Richard at the Globe, 2003, encapsulates this concern: "Why is Richard II always portrayed as an effeminate weekling (sic)? Is there anything in the play itself that suggests he was either weak or effeminate? Nothing that I can find", writes Stephen Yourke. The response by Maxie Smith is not couched in any academic register, and is all the more striking for its inconsiderate prejudice: "He was literally basically your stereotypical flamboyant gay guy and did not give two shits about ruling. Combine this with also very strongly believing in the divine right of kings and having absolutely no doubt that this was where he was meant to be and he could do no wrong regardless of how much of a shitshow the country was, you wind up with a pretty shit ruler who also happens to be quite effeminate": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rAYmmIYCGQ&index=2&list=PLB7544A25CC61FCD6 (Accessed 18 October 2018).

[5] The most famous early author of this judgement is S.T. Coleridge, who writes consistently of Richard's "insincerity, partiality, arbitrariness, and favouritism" (1930: 153).

ard is beholden to political advisors in a complicated system of factions and alignments and manoeuvrings for power that, historically, had surrounded Richard for twenty years. The one reference to Richard's homosexuality occurs at the execution of Green and Bushy when Bolingbroke, hardly a disinterested party, unfolds some causes of their deaths to wash the blood from his hands, sodomy being the only capital crime he lists. To bias the audience to believe this accusation, productions must ignore the sympathetic relationship between the Queen and the accused, and cut the lines or underplay the romance in the parting love scene between the King and Queen.[6] Richard speaking poetic verse does not make him a "poetic king", with its connotations of pragmatic weakness and abstract fantasy. Richard in action goes in person to the war in Ireland. He is engaged in battles and political machinations. He violently resists his assassins. We challenge the binary notion of Richard as poetical king and Bolingbrook as a silent, manly soldier. Our argument is based to a large degree on our experience of embodying the text – working from the inside out rather than the outside in – which changed our own positions in an early draft of this work, as we re-discovered the text in performance, as if for the first time. This experience led us to ask questions about the nature of power in *Richard II*: its distribution, its qualities, its transforming and transformative nature.

Richard II is Shakespeare's most metatheatrical King. This is expressed by his play between shadow and substance in the deposition scene, and by the performative nature of his language in and out of office. The image of political theatricality is consecrated by York's description of the deposed Richard as an unapplauded actor following the great performance of Bolingbroke.[7] But a failed actor in office, he becomes a consummate actor in failure. In his naked vulnerability as everyman he finally wields the greatest power an actor can have inside a theatrical performance: the power of complete sympathy and identification from the audience.

The power of language and the language of power in *Richard II*, and its relationship to the theatrical and political power of the character who uses such language, are, as in many other Shakespeare plays, inversely proportional to each other. When Richard appears to exercise the greatest political power through the performative authority of language as king, he is weakest in theatrical terms. And when he has lost this performative power to change his political world, he is invested with a new theatrical and po-

[6] See: RSC *Richard II*, dir. Gregory Doran (2013); *The Hollow Crown: Richard II*, dir. Rupert Goold (2012); Shakespeare's Globe, *Richard II*, dir. Tim Carroll (2003); National Theatre *Richard II*, dir. Deborah Warner (1995).

[7] "As in a theater the eyes of men, / After a well-graced actor leaves the stage, / Are idly bent on him that enters next, / Thinking his prattle to be tedious, / Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes / Did scowl on gentle Richard." (1.2.25-30).

etical power that, affecting change in the audience, has the capacity to influence a world beyond the confines of the play. For it is not kingship as an institution of political power that gives Shakespeare's characters theatrical potency. It is rather the loss of that power. Time and again speeches and moments that are most memorable, the ones we quote, fixate on, write endlessly about, recall in our retellings of the play, and which shake us to the very core, tend to be when the characters are at their most vulnerable.

A signal example is Macbeth's speech, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" (*Macbeth*, 5.5.22), spoken when he has lost his wife and is about to lose his kingdom. He speaks for the first time without ambition or artifice, finding in self-acceptance a new awareness, and in the depth of his loneliness creating community with the audience, joined in the predicament of being poor players on the stage of life, creeping towards dusty death. We see this in the figure of Lady Macbeth, in her nightgown, wailing from a heart sorely charged; Cleopatra, on her death bed, laying aside her temporal power; Hamlet unable to take up the name of action; Claudius alone on stage trying vainly to pray for forgiveness; Lear in the storm giving Poor Tom precedence to enter shelter; Henry V doffing his kingly attire, walking like a shadow amongst his men; Coriolanus sacrificing his life for his family and Prospero's epilogue appealing to a common need for release and pardon, through the recognition of his loss of power.

Richard begins as a king, whose empty rhyming couplets querulously insisting that he should be unquestionably obeyed by his ordained power as God on earth, make us almost willing to see him deposed. Bolingbroke in contrast captivates with status and theatrical power, dominating much of the first half of the play during Richard's absence in Ireland. He speaks brave and lyrical verses, displays the courage of a soldier, and shows astute political acumen. And yet something shifts when the crown is handed to Bolingbroke. This chiasmus is the turning-point of the play, the hinging point, the see-saw that tips its balance structurally, poetically and visually as two men and two simultaneous kings hold the crown between them. The hollow crown that lies at the centre is a stage where death "the antic" sits and holds his court, and a deep well that will fill one bucket and empty another. One will take the crown and the other fall – the one bucket dancing in the air, the other down and full of tears. And yet, in losing everything, Richard takes up something he has lacked until then. The sympathy of the audience. Devoid of political power and temporal kingship he becomes another kind of king.[8]

[8] "One of the great joys of playing this play is how the sympathies shift. It's quite hard to sympathise with Richard initially, perhaps it needs a bit of persuading that he is the right king at the right time and yet as the play unfolds, Bolingbroke, who in some

But how is this done? How are we transformed to empathise with a man who takes full command of language and the stage – a man who embodies both the "infinite faculties" of humanity and its ultimate reduction to a "quintessence of dust"?

Richard II is written entirely in verse, a rare case in Shakespeare's canon. This does not mean that the figured language is inaccessible and archaic. Shakespeare plays different uses of the verse against each other to particular theatrical effect and development of character. At times, the language seems so natural that it appears prose-like. At others he heightens the verse form making it self-consciously formulaic and artificial. This is notable in the early use – as mentioned above – of Richard's innumerable, often too pat, rhyming couplets that empty the language of power.

The play of power and weakness is especially evident in the performative speech acts in the first and the third scenes, what the philosopher J.L. Austin called illocutionary performatives. Illocutionary acts are the uses of language that do not describe but rather change things in the world. They transform relationships through the exercise of power inherent in language – a combination of linguistic and social convention that is embedded in a particular set of social and historical relations.

In the first and third scenes the king occupies the centre of an elaborate ceremony of power, primarily through public illocutionary acts that are designed to display and exercise the authority of his word and settle in relatively impersonal, objective ways, disputes between his subjects. But the ringing of rhyming couplets, his entreaties for obedience behind the hollow threat of command, and the transformation of the outcome, all indicate the king's unspoken complicity in the guilt of Gloucester's murder and his inability to control those who have the capacity to expose it.

Bolingbroke and Mowbray exercise their conventional rights of public challenge to air and prove their charges of treason against each other. The charge of treason is itself a product of ceremony. It is brought into being by the social and politically endowed concept of royal sovereignty, and in the medieval world of *Richard II* it is extended in formal ritual through practices. The two scenes are saturated with examples of such ritualistic illocutionary speech acts in the accusations, the challenges, the throwing down

ways has been the avenging hero, becomes a slightly more ambiguous character; Richard certainly gains some kind of redemption, I think, in the eyes of the audience, and I think, as ever with Shakespeare, one of the great joys of his work is that he presents people for who they are and he doesn't judge them for who they are, and that, I think, is part of what makes his plays live on . . . he presents them in all their glory and all their ambiguity of morality that runs through every one of us. In this play he takes us on an unpredictable journey of allegiances which is part of what I think makes this such a masterpiece." (David Tennent, "Interview", in Doran 2014).

of gages, the royal commands. These formal challenges form an arena for the display of the power of the king's word. He is empowered by his position and the ceremony of the occasion to demand responses from the antagonists, decide how the dispute will be settled, and, in the end, controversially, to interrupt the settled way of deciding the dispute through combat, by banishing both the antagonists. But they also register the limits of a king's power of speech. It is undercut by conflicting crosscurrents: he cannot, for example, compel the antagonists to pick up their gages, withdraw their accusations, or be friends. And even when he attempts to assert the authority of his word, he in fact signals its impotence:

> We were not born to sue, but to command,
> Which, since we cannot do, to make you friends,
> Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
> At Coventry upon Saint Lambert's day.
> (1.1.202-5)

Richard qualifies the limitations of his power – he cannot make them friends – but the caesura between "Which, we cannot do" and "to make you friends", suggests that he cannot command at all, and presages his final loss of command. Mowbray reminds him of further limits of his power when, in response to the collected force of the king's imperative, "Norfolk, throw down, we bid; there is no boot", he declares, "My life thou shalt command, but not my shame" (1.1.171).

The most pointed reminder of the absolute limits of the power of the "breath of kings" comes in Gaunt's sharp rejoinder that while Richard may have the power to take or curtail life, he has none to give it or extend it:

> King Richard — Why, uncle, thou hast many years to live.
> Gaunt — But not a minute, king, that thou canst give.
> (1.3.231-2)

In the public show of royal illocutionary force, we are made aware of the fragility of the theatre of power that Richard inhabits. Richard as king cannot effect any change in the hearts of men, and he has no power over death.

A reprisal of the opening confrontation between Mowbray and Bolingbroke occurs at the opening of the deposition scene, with a flurry of farcical interchanges, mocking the illocutionary act of throwing down a gage. The scene begins in seriousness and soon escalates to the point of absurdity as gages are thrown down left, right and centre in acts of comic, self-righteous anger. The court ritual has turned into a circus performance. This not only casts our mind back to the first scene in which the stately perfor-

mance is contained by solemn ritual and ceremony, but also sets up the theatrical extravagance of the deposition scene to follow.

This scene is the chiasmus or hinge on which political power is transferred to Bolingbroke through the external symbols of crown, gown, and sceptre. But here Richard, having lost his regal illocutionary power, begins to command his theatrical power. Appearing in front of the assembly, already referring to Bolingbroke as "king", Richard asks: "To do what service am I sent for hither?" (4.1.185). This sets the scene for Richard as performer. What is Richard's new function, as functionary of the state? And what role does he now have as the agent of the transfer of power to the new king? The idea of service also invokes the performative function of the actor or players, who were always servants – the 'men' of an aristocrat, king or queen.

Richard is aware of the performative function that he must play in this charade. York then casts him in his role. He gives him his lines, his motivation, his back story, and the desire of his audience for Richard to readily participate in the performative undoing of himself.

> To do that office of thine own good will
> Which tired majesty did make thee offer:
> The resignation of thy state and crown
> To Henry Bolingbroke.
> (177-80)

Richard must now publicly declare his *willingness* to resign the crown and that his had been the idea to do so. The deposition requires ceremony – a set of illocutionary practices – to deem it legitimate and authoritative in the eyes of the commons. But there are no settled forms of ceremony for what York calls Richard's "office". Richard is therefore challenged to invent them performatively, and in doing so he occupies a position of immense theatrical strength, even as he resigns his political power.

With the words – "Give me the crown" (190) – Richard accepts the part in which he is cast to do his "service". From this point Richard inhabits the role making apparent the hyperbolic absurdity of the required enactment.

Once an actor is cast in a role there is an element of danger. The theatre is a political space and the power of performance is volatile and uncontrollable. Actors are given their part and their lines but once they are on stage there is very little that can be done to control them. Richard is a recalcitrant player, and he calls into the public spotlight the truth of the situation with a precisely chosen verb. "Here cousin *seize* the crown" (190; emphasis added), he orders: naming the very act that Bolingbroke was endeavouring to disguise. Bolingbroke hesitates. "Here cousin" (190), Richard teases, subjecting Bolingbroke to a demeaning irony. King and usurper stand opposed,

casting each other in roles neither wishes to play.

One source of Richard's power is his capacity to invent the ceremony of resigning the kingship *in his own terms*. Richard insists on his own, central and commanding agency in the undoing of himself.

The chiasmus "Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be" (210) shows Richard struggling with his complicity in resigning the crown; but also with his own identity, for what happens to the actor once the performance is over? Richard commences his journey accepting that he must now be "nothing": "Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be" (210). There is no I. There is no self. Richard will strip himself bare, but the negation of the "I" will lie in the power the "I" has to negate itself: "Therefore no "no," for I resign to thee" (211; emphasis added). Then he adopts a patterned rhetoric, creating a new unprecedented form of ceremony:

> Now, mark me how I will undo myself.
> I give this heavy weight from off my head
> And this unwieldy scepter from my hand,
> The pride of kingly sway from out my heart.
> (4.1.212-15)

Now he employs ringing anaphora:

> With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
> With mine own hands I give away my crown,
> With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
> With mine own breath release all duteous oaths.
> All pomp and majesty I do forswear.
> My manors, rents, revenues I forgo;
> My acts, decrees, and statutes I deny.
> God pardon all oaths that are broke to me.
> God keep all vows unbroke are made to thee.
> (4.1.216-24)

This is the actor with the power to command attention, and with the newly assumed and invented authority to undo himself – "with mine own hands". His undoing of himself is paradoxically centred on a series of illocutionary acts of supreme confidence: "I give . . . deny . . . release . . . forswear . . . forego . . . deny". Prior illocutionary acts – the sacred prerogatives and duties of kingship, the oaths made to him, and his rights and prior legal performatives – are all dissolved in the fresh authority of his tongue.

He ends this with: "Make me, that nothing have, with nothing grieved, / And thou with all pleased that hast all achieved" (4.1.225-6). He wants this act to melt him away to nothing; to be nothing so he may with nothing be grieved. But although he can melt away his kingship and even his identity, he cannot resign his grief. Nor can the kingdom of grief be usurped.

Against the weight and power of Richard's rhetorical and illocutionary performance, Bolingbroke's single-line responses are entirely reactive, unable to generate the accumulated resonances of Richard's use of anaphora or repeated phrases. Richard gives Bolingbroke his kingship, but paradoxically the usurper begins to be imprisoned. Bolingbroke becomes more and more limited and constrained, reduced to lesser and lesser manoeuvres. He has fewer and fewer lines, which serve merely to feed Richard's word play.

Not only is Bolingbroke denied agency; he is in fact, histrionically, under Richard's control, at his command. The man who, up to this point, has been the rugged champion hero, standing up for the health of the state, the down-trodden and those oppressed by the "caterpillars of the commonwealth" (2.3.170), demanding no more than his fair and rightful claims. The hero becomes the anti-hero and that switch is hinged and perfectly balanced in the exchanging of the crown. As Bolingbroke rises in political power he falls in our esteem and consequently, in his theatrical power.

Richard calls for the mirror, in what Christopher Pye calls "an overt bit of theatrics" (1988: 578). However, this is not merely a theatrical game, but a need to know who he is when he no longer has an assigned role to play. He must see himself reflected to understand, at this moment of utter desolation, when he has no name, no identity, no role, what it is that he must do, say and perform – "I know not now what name to call myself" (4.1.270). The mirror held up to nature is something of which Hamlet reminds us. The mirror was an instrument of education. Early modern instruction manuals bore titles like: *The Mirror of Good Manners*. A compendium of tragic monologues of fallen English political figures, almost constantly in print from 1559-1621, was titled *A Mirror for Magistrates*. He calls for a mirror, "That it may show me what a face I have since it is bankrupt of his majesty" (4.1.277). Richard seeks an instructional manual to know himself, and we are simultaneously looking in this mirror of performance to know ourselves. With the stripping of his identity, our opinions and judgments up to this point are challenged and stripped away. A centrifugal moment that pulls our sympathy to Richard. With him we enter the looking glass, become inverted, and transform our perceptions and emotions.

Shattering the mirror, Richard renders his audience dumb – "Mark silent king the moral of this sport . . .". It is sport – a game – and now the triumphant blow – "How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face" (4.1.300-1) – *everyone see how you have treated me – how my sorrow has destroyed me, how my face is shattered in a grand theatrical gesture*. Then Bolingbroke rejoins – "The shadow of your sorrow has destroyed the shadow of your face" (302). This is Bolingbroke's moment of triumph. For Richard is halted in his performance – "Say that again. The shadow of my sorrow? Ha, let's see" (303) – he considers. At this critical point of interruption Richard self-re-

flexively plays the critic to Bolingbroke's performance. The chiasmus of the movement of the crown is accompanied by a rhetorical chiasmus. Richard moves beyond overt theatrics to a more subtle reflection on the relation between shadow and substance, interiority and show, into a different kind of theatricality in which what Pye calls the "limitless theatrical illusion" (1988: 578) of the mirror touches the substance of shared humanity. Here character and actor abandon histrionics for a reflection on the reality and also the inscrutability of human emotion. The imagery is immensely complex, resonating with the idea of shadow as mere reflection, as what is unreal, and as the idea of the player or performer as a mere walking shadow.

Actors are shadows that strut and fret; the mirror shows us shadows; the game is but a shadow; but where lies the substance? "Tis very true", Richard declares, "my grief lies all within" (307). He is struck by the realisation that all he has been doing is performing the shadow of his grief – "And these external manners of lament / Are merely shadows to the unseen grief / That swells with silence in the tortured soul" (308-10). Grief cannot be shown or shared; it is silent, hidden and its substance lies in the soul. This prefigures Hamlet's statement to his mother – "I know not 'seems' . . . I have that within which passeth show" (*Hamlet* 1.2.79, 88-9). Richard has that within which passes show. And we as an audience are taken out of the illusion of the performative shadows of actor's body and mirror's image to consider where the substance lies. Alone in our souls. Then Richard asks to leave. He has resigned his crown, and now he resigns his role as actor. He must be alone with his grief. He wishes to go anywhere – as long as he is out of the scrutinizing gaze of his audience.

We ponder for a terrifying moment that everyone is alone with the substance of grief in their souls. But Shakespeare doesn't leave us there. He uses the power of a different kind of theatrical language that allows us to share the substance of Richard's grief, not merely its shadows. With the shattering of the mirror, Richard turns inward, inverting the relation of shadow to substance, and forging a new theatrical power of solitary introspection that is most powerful when it is shared, paradoxically, alone with a silent, enrapt, audience.

The prison scene is the first moment when someone is alone on stage. Shakespeare gives Richard the only soliloquy in the play in sublime verse, untrammelled by rhyming couplets. At his most solitary, isolated moment, Richard connects profoundly with an extended humanity beyond himself. The soliloquy is one of Shakespeare's longest pieces of uninterrupted verse, some 66 lines, exactly double Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech. Its structure repeats that of the entire play in that it is also hinged at a mid-point, when the interruption of music from outside induces a change in the quality, rhythm and pace of Richard's interior thought. Each half

offers an expression of grief and philosophical wrestling in different modes.

The first line, "I have been studying how I may compare / This prison where I live unto the world . . ." (5.5.1-2), finds Richard in the middle of a solitary mental project. Thinking has preceded his speaking, and the thinking is a complex conundrum. It has many layers. How can his solitary condition reflect a larger experience that reconnects him to the world? How can the truth of existence be understood in a prison? What solace may be found in a pure interiority of thought and feeling? And how may the theatrical stage be a metaphor and not merely a simile for the world: not simply like the world, but the world itself? How may the shadow be the substance?

Stripped of everything except his power to think and speak, Richard thus confronts the problem of solipsism by inverting it. For all his attempts to compare his prison to the world he finds he cannot do it. In contrast to his earlier solipsism, in which he acted as if he alone were the whole world, now, alone, he finds that the world must be peopled by others. In prison he now imagines the world as a place of community and connection, not of solitary existence. I can't compare this prison to the world, for there are no people here, as if the world is only real through our relationship to others: "For because the world is populous / And here is not a creature but myself, / I cannot do it" (5.5.3-5).

But Richard says this to a sea of eyes. This is where Shakespeare takes us from Richard's earlier disquisition on the difference between shadow and substance, inner grief and external performance at the end of the deposition scene. Yes, we are all alone in our grief; here is not a creature but myself. And yet here is a world full of people, with whom I may share a common experience through the connection of empathy: through language. Grief swells with *silence* in the tortured soul – but it is words that express that thought. This monologue with himself is actually a duologue with us – the audience.

He must forge his world like a playwright forges the world we are watching with words, filling the silence and emptiness with sounds and images, giving birth to a whole population of embodied thought. It is difficult work. "Yet I will hammer it out" (5.5.5). In doing so, he builds, word by word, a connection to the audience, isolated and imprisoned in their own bodies yet recognising the self in the other.

Our imaginations engaged, we watch and listen as each thought is born and begets the next in unexpected fecundity.

My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
My soul the father: and these two beget
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
And these same thoughts people this little world,

In humors like the people of this world,
For no thought is contented.
(5.5.6-11)

The verse lines here are filled with caesuras. Few sentences in the first half of the soliloquy end on the line, denoting the struggle in this childbirth. Richard engages in a cerebral and spiritual conflict attempting to befriend his thoughts so that they can offer relief, but he is taken and takes us in unexpected directions. The "still-breeding thoughts" people his "little world" (8-9) and the success of this, he realises, lies in the fact that the humours of these thoughts match their analogues in the real world, for none of them is "contented". This introduces a running theme for the rest of his reflection: what is it to be human and contented? As he sets the "word against the word" in the form of two contradictory Biblical notions about the possibility of salvation, he moves through further, conflicted positions that contradict his desire to find solace through solitary thought. He is wracked by ambition and empty consolation alike – vainly imagining the possibility of clawing his way through "the flinty ribs / Of this *hard world*" (20-1; emphasis added) (its hardness conveyed by the spondee – two strong stresses) before he moves to the happier thoughts that find relief in the thought of shared suffering: Richard becomes the "silly beggar sitting in the stocks", sharing his own "misfortunes on the back / Of such as have before endured the like" (25-30). For he draws comfort in the fact that he is not "the first of fortunes slaves, / Nor shall not be the last" (24-5). And the audience is drawn to this moment of vulnerability connecting in recognition that we are not alone.

His critical confession to his audience, "Thus play I in one person many people, / And none contented" (30-1), returns us both to the general notion that no-one in the world is contented, and his playing out, through the conflict between the figures he plays – one urging him to think himself king, another unkinging him again – the absolute elusiveness of contentment. His competing thoughts finally lead Richard to a single, clinching conclusion that includes all human beings in its embrace. "But what'ere I be" – whatever role I play – king or beggar, whatever thoughts I have to define the world or myself – "Nor I, nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased / Till he be eased with being nothing" (39-41). This is not merely the thought of death offering solace, or a reflection on the emptiness of ambition, but a sense that the loss of ego, the self-acceptance of being a "small model of the barren earth" (3.2.158) – our quintessence of dust – is what we must come to terms with before we can be truly content. We will be pleased with nothing until we are eased with being nothing.

The differences in humour and status, ambition and hope, that have

been entertained in the population of Richard's thoughts and enacted in the play are now negated through a sense of profound identity in the recognition of a shared humanity. The act of stripping us all back to nothing gives us a connection that renders us the least lonely we can possibly be as spectators: finding in our nothingness a real sense of what makes us everything.

A change in rhythm, thought and feeling is introduced with the intrusion of music in the middle of the speech. It comes from outside the world he has created, from beyond the prison cell, evoking the idea of music from the celestial spheres. But the music is out of time. Just as his planetary alignment is harsh and jangled. "How sour sweet music is / When time is broke and no proportion kept. / So is it in the music of men's lives" (5.5.43-5) Now the verse gallops on, the thoughts run uninterrupted, the meter regular like a ticking clock. Having struggled through his thoughts, he now struggles through his feelings, which carry the verse like a breaking wave. His sighs strike like a clamouring bell on his heart, his finger is a dial point to wipe away his tears, he has become a timepiece measuring each minute with his grief, a puppet beating out time dictated by Bolingbroke, who sweeps forward unchecked: "But my time / Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy, / While I stand fooling here, his jack of the clock" (59-61).

Shakespeare always equates music and time: music out of time signals a greater time out of joint. Instead of soothing the unruly spirit, music out of time provokes madness: "This music mads me" (62). But this madness proves to be a moment of clarity for Richard, as he recognizes his ability to sense "time broke in a disordered string" (47) as his failure to detect his "true time broke" (49). His ear is now true, and we listen to his next lamenting chiasmus with total empathy, sharing the sadness of its music, as the regular pulse of the iambic line heals the broken time of the earlier verse: "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me" (50).

This is another play of mirrors, balanced and hinged, in repeated chiasmus: heroes and anti-heroes, thoughts and feelings, solitariness and community, substance and shadow. And finally love against hate. Richard ends with a blessing that embraces the audience, the musician, and himself in a community of love: "Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me, / For 'tis a sign of love, and love to Richard / Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world" (65-7). We return to the play of substance and shadow: heart against sign, broach against body. This utterly exposed and powerless man has performed to us in solitary intimacy. It is a completely different performance from the formulae of the challenge scenes or the commanding histrionic ironies of the deposition scene. Now the performance of self, the shadows of those performances, is the substance that he thought ineffable, hidden within, in the private consumption of grief. In the final soliloquy Shake-

speare has forged a way for Richard to lament and to share that lament, not in public show but in our willingness and capacity to *follow* Richard, along the lines of a unique theatrical power that, miraculously, makes "that within" something shared.

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Epic-Oracular Markedness in Fifth-Century BCE Greek Comic Fragments[1]

Abstract

The function of register features and linguistic indicators for epic (phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntactic structures, formulas, metre, narrative outset) in fragments of Sicilian and Old Attic comedy constitute the subject of this paper. Decoding epic-oracular register in comedy contributes to the reading of the fragmentary text. This is particularly significant in the lack of an explanatory context. The conscious juxtaposition of epic and comic registers and patterns by comedians can be thought of as a parodic game creating comic dissonance; but comic texts also reflect discourses on genre indicators of the time and should thus be considered in the larger framework of the development of Greek philological thought.

Keywords: Old Greek comedy; fragments; intertext; epic marker

Faced with a literary text we can expect to find a whole range of linguistic variables operating at various levels and performing different functions. In texts that have come down to us complete, markedness is more recognizable, and the context contributes to interpreting the function of a certain marked element (parody, an elevated style, imitation etc.). In a fragmentary text, however, it is the markedness that takes on the role of the context permitting an attempt at interpretation. In order to understand and interpret fragmentary texts (where the context is missing, sometimes containing only one word or even only parts of a word) linguistic markers are of central significance.

In this paper generic markedness will be discussed, in other words the ways in which a certain register is decoded in comedy, and which linguis-

[1] This article was inspired and developed through discussions on comic fragments in the meetings of the project KomFrag (Kommentierung der Fragmente der griechischen Komödie) at the University of Freiburg. I am grateful to all participants in the project for both major and minor remarks and ideas. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers of the journal *Skenè* for their significant comments.

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tic and extralinguistic elements contribute to this decoding. In particular, the function of epic-oracular linguistic indicators[2] such as phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, formulas, metre and narrative structures in fragmentary texts of Sicilian and Old Attic comedy will be analysed. Decoding markedness is more complicated in a comic text than in any other genre. Old comedy does not have any standard 'comic' register as the nature of comedy presupposes linguistic variation. Some parts of comedy have their 'typical' register, the genre as a whole however presents a variety of registers, styles and dialects.[3]

The role of generic markers is therefore increased in Old comedy, as markers are employed to indicate register-switching, to point to intertextuality, to decode parody, and finally to serve as evidence of linguistic knowledge of the time, as changing register presumes an awareness of linguistic standards Andreas Willi (2010: 303-304). It is thus the combination of fragmentary text and the comic genre that makes this study necessary. Both require a linguistic analysis of generic markedness.

1. Introduction

The essential constituent of markedness is that it conveys information Battistella (1996: 9-13). This makes it central to the study of fragments as any piece of information helps towards a reconstruction of the content. It is clear that contextual knowledge is crucial for markedness, as epic-oracular form or metre in itself cannot serve as a marker. In the case of linguistic markers in comic text, the genre of comedy serves as this 'contextual knowledge' shared by the audience, certain linguistic patterns being associated with the comic genre. Any deviations from these linguistic 'standards' have to be decoded.

Whilst searching for epic-oracular indicators in comic text, some points should be noted. Due to a lack of substantial knowledge of standard Syracusan Doric (in the case of Sicilian comedy) or standard Attic (in the case of Attic comedy), the process of identification of deviant forms is limited.[4] Further, due to a lack of knowledge of the whole range of epic texts up until the end of the 5th c. BCE, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to label epic forms by relating them to certain specific sources such as Homeric

[2] On the notion of markedness and the distinction between markers, stereotypes, and indicators in Old comedy, see Colvin 1999: 21-6. On linguistic features used for register analysis, see Biber 1995: 27-31.

[3] See Willi 2003: 2-5 and López Eire 2004.

[4] On Epicharmus' Syracusan dialect, see Cassio 2002; on Aristophanes' Attic, see Willi 2003: 232-69.

epic, Hesiod, cyclic poems or contemporary epics. Those Aristophanic comedies that do survive serves as a significant aid to analysing epic-oracular markers.[5] Fragmentary texts usually do not reveal who the speaker of the epically marked word(s) may have been, switches in register-code within a monologue by the same speaker, or, finally, those occasions when the entrance of a new character is indicated by epic markedness.

Epic-oracular markers constitute a broad spectrum of signals in comic texts. The first six paragraphs below deal with linguistic indicators (metre, epic formulas, syntactic constructions, lexemes, morphemes, phonemes). Further below non-linguistic indicators in a strict sense (epic authors mentioned in the title or in the text, para-epic titles, epic quotations, and epic narrative structure) are discussed. The analysis will then for the most part turn to linguistic epic markers, which might be 'hidden' in comedy, first locating and then if possible situating the epic register in comic text.

2. Hexameter as a Marker

The dactylic hexameter is generally marked in comedy.[6] Delving more deeply, hexameters are not necessarily epic markers, they can mark the genre of oracle (often in hexameter and in elevated register) as well, or a mixture of both. They can also mark lyric register and parody lyric parties of tragedy.[7] Thus for hexameter to serve as a generic marker it needs other markers to exist in the text, pointing in the same direction.[8]

[5] See Platter 2007: 108-42. On numerous examples of Homeric intertextuality in the surviving Aristophanic comedies and in the fragments of Attic comedy, see Scherrans 1893, Magnelli 2004, and Quaglia 2007 with further bibliography.

[6] On the markedness of hexameter in Old Attic comedy, see Unger 1911: 14-47, in the surviving Aristophanic comedies, see Kloss 2001: 70-89; on the functions of hexameter in Attic drama, see Pretagostini 1995.

[7] Pretagostini 1995: 167, 181-6; Parker 1997: 53.

[8] With respect to the use of hexameter in Sicilian and Old Attic comedy: Epicharmus' comic corpus contains 3 hexameter verses: *Pyrrha kai Promatheus* frs 113, 415; *Seirenes* fr. 121, incert. fr. 224; Crates has 1 hexameter verse: *Samioi* fr. 33; Cratinus has 36 (37?) hexameters: *Archilochoi* frs 6-8; *Kleoboulinae* fr. 94; *Nomoi* frs 135-136; *Odysses* frs 149-150; *Panoptai* frs 161-162; *Pylaia* fr. 183; *Seriphioi* frs 222-224; *Cheirones* frs 253-255, fr. 264 might be a part of a hexameter verse; *Horai* fr. 280; incert. frs 349-354; Teleclides has 1 hexameter verse: incert. fr. 49; Pherectrates has 13 verses: *Cheiron* fr. 162; Hermippus has 35 verses: *Phormophoroi* fr. 63 and incert. fr. 77; Phrynichus has 1 verse: incert. fr. 75; Eupolis has 3 verses: *Poleis* fr. 249; *Chrysoun genos* fr. 315; dub. fr. 491; Aristophanes' fragments contain 7 hexameters (some cases being problematic): *Amphiaraos* fr. 29; *Danaides* fr. 267 (perhaps anapaestic tetrameter); *Dramata ē Kentauros* fr. 284 (questionable); *Eirene II* fr. 308; *Lemniai* fr. 383 (perhaps anapaestic tetrameter); incert. fr. 714; Plato has 18 verses: *Phaon* fr. 189, 6 and 9-22 and *Adonis* fr. 3; Metagenes has 5 verses:

Secondly, it is worth noting that Cratinus and Hermippus contain a higher proportion of hexameter verses than other comic playwrights (Cratinus has 36 verses out of ca. 372 surviving (9,68%); Hermippus has 35 out of ca. 146 (23,97%)).[9] This high percentage use of hexameter, which does not correspond to standard Old Attic comedy (e.g. Aristophanes has 173 hexameter verses out of 15290 from his eleven comedies (1,13%), Eupolis has 3 verses out of ca. 1228 surviving (0,24%)), can be explained either through personal choice or through the metric development of the genre. As argued by Zielinski, hexameter might have been used in earlier Old comedy for the parties which in Aristophanes are written in anapaestic tetrameter.[10] It is not easy therefore to distinguish between hexameter as generic marker and hexameter as a standard meter for certain parts of Cratinus' comedy.

Hermippus, the second 'problematic' playwright, was credited with having written *parodiai*.[11] It remains open whether *parodia* refers to epic parody in comedy or to non-dramatic epic parodies such as Hegemon of Thasos. And if Hermippus wrote non-dramatic epic parodies, it remains open whether his two long hexameter fragments (frs 63 and 77) belong to comedy or to this genre of parody.

3. Formulas and Other Metric Units as Markers

Understanding formula in Milman Parry's way as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (1930: 80), it makes sense to distinguish formulas from metric units taken from epic texts, employed at the beginning or end of the hexameter verse. Epic formulas and other metric units were in fact used by comic poets, sometimes intact, sometimes transferred to Attic, but with the construction remaining epically marked.

Some clear epic formulas are found at the beginning of hexameter vers-

Aurai ē Mammakythos fr. 4 and incert. fr. 19; Theopompus has 4 verses: *Mēdos* fr. 31. All comic fragments are quoted according to the *PCG*-edition by R. Kassel and C. Austin.

[9] The distribution of hexameters is different in Cratinus and Hermippus. Whilst in Cratinus his short hexameter fragments (1 to 5 verses) belong to nine different comedies, in Hermippus two long hexameter fragments are found (23 and 12 verses), one of them belonging to an undetermined play. On Cratinus see Bianchi 2017: 245-51; on Hermippus see Comentale 2017: 20-3.

[10] Zielinski 1887: 11. The metrical likeness of these two meters means that it is difficult to determine whether a number of the fragmentary lines were composed in hexameter or in anapaestic tetrameter (see examples in n8 above).

[11] Polem. fr. 45 Pr. ap. Ath. 15, 699a (= Herm. test. 7 PCG). See Comentale (2017 *ad loc.*).

es, such as ἔστι δέ τις ("there is a") used by Hermippus and Eupolis,[12] and ναυσὶν ἐπὶ γλαφυραῖς ("with hollow ships") in Hermippus for νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇσι(ν).[13]

Formulas found at the end of hexameter verse are more frequent. Hermippus in his catalogue of goods mentioned above used various epic *clausulae* (Homeric, Hesiodic and others), such as Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι ("having home on Olympus", fr. 63.1),[14] ἐπ' οἴνοπα πόντον ("to the wine-coloured sea", fr. 63.2),[15] νηῒ μελαίνῃ ("on black ship", fr. 63.3),[16] δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσι ("they have divided hearts", fr. 63.11),[17] ἴφια μῆλα ("plump apples", fr. 63.17),[18] σιγαλόεντα ("glittering", fr. 63.20),[19] τὰ γάρ τ' ἀναθήματα δαιτός ("for these are the ornaments of a feast", fr. 63.21).[20] Cratinus used ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους ("faithful companions", fr. 150.1)[21] and ῥοδοδάκτυλος οὖσα ("her being rosy-fingered", fr. 351) recalling Homeric ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς.[22] Pherecrates wrote ἐπὶ δαῖτα θάλειαν ("to a rich feast", fr. 162.1),[23] Hermippus used ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ ("at a rich feast", fr. 77.11).[24] Hermippus used also θεοὶ αὐτοί ("the gods themselves", fr. 77.1)[25] and ὑψερεφὲς δῶ ("high-roofed house", fr. 77.9),[26] Plato wrote πολλὸν γὰρ ἄμεινον ("for it is much better", fr. 189.16),[27] Metagenes used αἵ τε τάχιστα ("who very quick-

[12] Herm. fr. 77.6 and Eup. fr. 249, cf. Il. 2.811, 11.711, 722, *Od.* 3.293, 4.844; *h. Bacch.* 8; cf. also Pind. *Nem.* 9.6. Cf. *Od.* 13.96 Φόρκυνος δέ τίς ἐστι λιμήν.

[13] Herm. fr. 63.11. 12 times in Homer at the beginning of the verse, once in the middle (Il. 8.180). See also Cratin. fr. 355 mentioned above and n9 above.

[14] Hes. *Th.* 75; *h. Ap.* 112. See also the same formula within the same quotation in *Il.* 2.484, 11.218, 14.508, 16.112.

[15] ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον at the end of hexameter verse *Il.* 2.613, 5.771, 7.88, 23.143, *Od.* 2.421, 3.286, 4.474, 5.349, 6.170, *h. Ba.* 7; Hes. *Op.* 817, fr. 43(a), 56 M.-W. Cf. also in *Od.* 1.183 in the middle of the verse.

[16] 20 times in Homer, *h. Ap.* 397, 459, 497, 511; Hes. *Op.* 636.

[17] *Il.* 20.32 δίχα θυμὸν ἔχοντες and Hes. fr. 204.95 M.-W. δίχα θυμὸν ἔθεντο.

[18] 12 times in Homer and once in Hesiod, always at the end of hexameter verse. Cf. *h. Ven.* 169 in the middle of the verse.

[19] 23 times in Homer and 2 times in Homeric hymns.

[20] *Od.* 1.152 and 21.430.

[21] The clausula is found 9 times in Homer: *Il.* 16.363, *Od.* 9.100, 193, 10.387, 405, 408, 14.259, 17.428, 19.273. And in the nominative at the end of the verse 9 times more: *Il.* 3.378, 4.266, 8.332, 13.421, 23.6, *Od.* 9.172, 555, 10.471, 14.249.

[22] 27 times in Homer, always at the end of the verse. Cf. also Hes. *Op.* 610, Mimn. fr. 12.3 W.

[23] *Il.* 7.475, *Od.* 3.420, *h. Merc.* 480.

[24] *Od.* 8.76 and Hes. *Op.* 742.

[25] As clausula: *Il.* 9.497, 21,215, *Od.* 1.384, 11.139, 14.348, 357. Cf. also Hes. *Th.* 640 and fr. 185.14 M.-W. in the 4th and 5th foot – the same rhythmic structure.

[26] *Od.* 10.111, 15.424, 432.

[27] Cf. πολλὸν ἀμείνων *Il.* 6.479, 7.114, 11.787, 21.107; Theogn. 1, 394 at the end of the

ly", fr. 4.3)[28] and ὑπὸ γούνατα μισθοῦ ἔλυσαν ("loosened the knees for a fee", fr. 4.4),[29] Theopompus has υἷας Ἀχαιῶν ("the sons of the Achaeans", fr. 31.1).[30]

The following cases are not exact formulas, but metric units found at the beginning or at the end of hexameter verse thus signaling epic register: ἀλλὰ μάλ' ('but very', Pher. fr. 162.3),[31] ἀκούετε Σειρηνάων ("listen to the Sirens", Epich. fr. 121),[32] Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβοὺς ("to the Sidonians and the Eremboi", Cratin. fr. 223 and *Od.* 4.84); καὶ πλευρὰ βόεια ("and sides of beef", Herm. fr. 63.6 and καὶ νεῦρα βόεια, *Il.* 4.122); ἀγορεύω ("I inform", Metag. fr. 4.2).[33]

The following hexameter line is marked because of metrical and rhythmic resemblance, without an exact correspondence in vocabulary: ὄζει ἴων, ὄζει δὲ ῥόδων, ὄζει δ' ὑακίνθου ("it smells of violets, it smells of roses, it smells of hyacinth", Herm. fr. 77.8). It resembles the structure of the verse πρόσθε λέων, ὄπιθεν δὲ δράκων, μέσση δὲ χίμαιρα (*Il.* 6.181).

4. Syntactic Structure as a Marker

The use of specific epic syntactic constructions within a sentence can also serve as an epic marker. Thus, ἦσθε . . . πυὸν δαινύμενοι ("you (pl.) sat there . . . dining the first after-birth milk", fr. 149) in Cratinus signifies the use of the Homeric participle δαινύμενοι.[34] Further, δαινύμενοι is used six times in Homer together with the verbal form ἥμεθα (ἥμεθα δαινύμενοι).[35]

Another marked use of participle is found in Hermippus' comedy

hexameter verse and *Od.* 2.180 in the middle of the verse; cf. also πολλὸν ἀμείνω (Hes. *Op.* 19 and 320).

[28] Cf. οἵ τε τάχιστα *Od.* 18.263 and οἵ κε τάχιστα Il. 9.165 and *Od.* 16.349, always at the end of the verse.

[29] Cf. ὑπὸ γούνατ' ἔλυσεν *Il.* 11.579, 15.291, 17.349, 24.498; ὑπὸ γούνατ' ἔλυσε *Il.* 13.412, *Od.* 14.69, 236; γούνατ' ἔλυσεν *Il.* 5.176, 13.360, 16.425. Cf. γούνατ' ἔλυσα *Il.* 22.335 in the middle of the verse. See also Orth 2014: 404-5.

[30] 24 times in Homer, then Theopompus, always at the end of the hexameter verse

[31] The dactylic foot ἀλλὰ μάλ' occurs 28 times in Homer before it appears in Pherecrates, 17 times as the first foot and 11 times as the fifth. Pherecrates quotes here the beginning of the verse *Il.* 1.554 ἀλλὰ μάλ' εὔκηλος.

[32] Cf. ἀκούσῃς Σειρήνοιϊν (*Od.* 12.52) and see Cassio 2002: 71-2 and Bellocchi 2008: 268-9.

[33] ἀγορεύω(ν) at the end of hexameter verse are found 22 times in epic texts (18 in Homer, 2 in Homeric hymns, 2 in Hesiod).

[34] The participle is found 14 times in Homer, then in Hipp. fr. 26.3 W.; Pind. *Isth.* 6.36; Eur. Cycl. 326, 373; Her. 2.100, 9.16, then Cratinus, then in Hellenistic times.

[35] The verse ἥμεθα δαινύμενοι κρέα τ' ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ is repeated 6 times in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 9.162, 557, 10.184, 468, 477, 12.30).

Moirai. The participle of the verb κυλίνδεσθαι is used mainly in epic texts: ἐν τοῖς ἀχύροισι κυλινδομένην ("rolling in the husks", fr. 48.6).[36]

And Hermippus used a marked relative clause: οὗ καὶ ἀπὸ στόματος ("and from whose mouth", fr. 77.7), for which three epic parallels are found: τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης (*Il.* 1.249), τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ ῥίζης (*h. Cer.* 12), and τῆς καὶ ἀπὸ κρῆθεν βλεφάρων τ' ἄπο κυανεάων ([Hes.] *Scut.* 7).

Another Homeric syntactic feature is the progressive enjambement (cf. *Il.* 1.1-2) used by Metagenes in his hexameter fragment (fr. 4.1-2):[37]

<–⏑⏑–> ὑμῖν ὀρχηστρίδας εἶπον ἑταίρας
ὡραίας πρότερον, νῦν αὖθ' ὑμῖν ἀγορεύω

[. . . I told you before about dancing girls, hetaeras
beautiful; now, however, I am telling you of . . .]

Sometimes syntactic structure is marked contextually. The use of the same form within the same syntactic structure makes the context recognizable: πίννῃσι καὶ ὀστρείοισιν ὁμοίη ("she like mussels and oysters", Cratin. fr. 8, cf. ἀθανάτῃσι φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη, *Od.* 6.16 and παρθένῳ ἀδμήτῃ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη, "being like a pure maiden in height and mien", *h. Ven.* 82, trans. H.G. Evelyn-White in *Homeric Hymns* 1914: 411); στρώμασιν ἐν μαλακοῖς ("on soft bed-clothes", Herm. fr. 77.2 and κώεσιν ἐν μαλακοῖσιν *Od.* 3.38); εὐδαίμον' ἔτικτέ σε μήτηρ ("happy bore you your mother", Cratin. fr. 360.3).[38]

5. Lexemes as Markers

Epic vocabulary can provide important generic markers. Apart from quotations and formulas, elevated heroic or cosmological words can appear within standard Syracusan or standard Attic usage and thus create dissonance.

Epic epithets are used whilst mocking contemporary politicians such as πρεσβυγενὴς ("first-born, primeval" Cratin. fr. 258.1) and αἴθων ("fiery", Herm. fr. 47.7). Further examples could be the Homeric Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο changed by Cratinus into Ὀδυσσέι θείῳ ("with divine Odysseus", fr. 151.4), κλέος θεῖον ("divine glory", Epich. fr. 97.13),[39] δίοις τ' Ἀχαιοῖς ("divine

[36] Before Hermippus the participle is found 11 times in epic texts and 3 times in Pindar. Cf. Ar. *Nu.* 375. See especially the use κυλινδόμενος with κατὰ κόπρον "in dirt" *Il.* 22.414 and 24.640. Silk 2000: 307-8.

[37] See Orth 2014: 403 with further bibliography.

[38] Cf. *Il.* 6.24, 345, 10.404, 13.777, 17.78, 21.84, 22.428, *Od.* 3.95, 4.325, 6.25, 21.172; cf. also Eur. *Alc.* 638 and 865.

[39] Cf. *Il.* 10.212 and *Od.* 9.264 ὑπουράνιον κλέος. See Cassio 2002: 78.

Achaeans", Epich. fr. 97.15),[40] παιδί τ' Ἀτρέος φί[λωι ("dear son of Atreus", Epich. fr. 97.15),[41] δέρμα βόειον ("ox hide", Herm. fr. 63.4),[42] δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσι ("they have divided hearts", Herm. fr. 63.11),[43] ἄλλυδις ἄλλος ("one hither, another thither", Eup. fr. 172.11),[44] ἀσάμινθος ("bathing tub", Cratin. 234),[45] ἀγάννιφα ("much snowed on", Epich. fr. 128),[46] σιγαλόεις ("glittering", Herm. fr. 63.20),[47] πανημέριοι ("all day long", Cratin. fr. 149),[48] ἐριβώλακος ("with large clods", Cratin. fr. 61.2),[49] πολύτρητος ("much-pierced", Cratin. 226),[50] ἄναλτος ("insatiate", Cratet. 47 and Cratin. 410),[51] δαιδάλεον ("cunningly wrought", Theop. fr. 34.2),[52] the wordplay ἴφια μῆλα ("plump apples", Herm. fr. 63.17),[53] ὑψερεφής ("high-roofed", Herm. fr. 77.9),[54] the epic syntagma ἀμβροσία καὶ νέκταρ ("ambrosia with nectar", Herm. fr. 77.10),[55] βοῶπις ("cow-eyed", Eup. fr. 438),[56] κυνῶπις ("dog-eyed", Cratin. fr. 259),[57] Ἰθακησία ("Ithacan", Cratin. fr. 264),[58] εἰλίπους

[40] δῖοι Ἀχαιοί is found 7 times in Homer.

[41] Cf. *Il.* 16.460 and 17.79.

[42] Cf. *Od.* 14.24.

[43] Cf. the Homeric expression δίχα θυμὸς found in *Il.* 20.32, 21.386, *Od.* 16,73, 19.524; Choeril. ep. fr. dub. 22.23 Bernabé; Hes. fr. 204.95 M.-W. δίχα θυμὸν. Cf. also δίχα βουλή in *Il.* 18.510, *Od.* 3.127, 150.

[44] 13 times in Homer, then in Eupolis.

[45] 11 times in Homer, then in Cratinus.

[46] 2 times in Homer, 2 times in Homeric hymns, 2 times in Hesiodic fragments, then in Epicharmus, then in Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

[47] 23 times in Homer and 2 times in Homeric hymns, then in Hermippus and then in Hellenistic poetry.

[48] 12 times in Homer, once in 'Hesiodic' *Scutum*, once in Theognis and 2 times in Euripides.

[49] 16 times in Homer, then in Cratinus.

[50] 3 times in the *Odyssey* before Cratinus: *Od.* 1.111, 22.439, 453 always with σπόγγος.

[51] 3 times in the *Odyssey* before Crates and Cratinus (*Od.* 17.228, 18.114, 364), then 19 times in the Hippocratic corpus apparently as a medical term, then once in Timocles (fr. 16.7).

[52] 17 times in Homer, 4 times in Hesiod, 3 times in Pindar, once in Simonides, once in Euripides, 2 times in Bacchylides, then in Theopompus.

[53] 12 times in Homer and once in Hesiod, once in *h. Ven.* 169 (always with the meaning "goodly sheep"). In Hermippus, however, the wordplay is built around the homonymic μῆλον for "apple".

[54] 14 times in Homer and *h. Merc.* 23, then in Hermippus.

[55] Cf. *Od.* 5.93, 9.359, h. Cer. 49; Hes. *Th.* 796; Cypr. fr. 4.5 Bernabé. Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 196 and Olson (2002 *ad loc.*).

[56] 17 times in Homer, 4 times in *Homeric hymns*, 4 times in Hesiod, once in Pindar, 2 times in Bacchylides. See also Olson 2014 *ad loc.*

[57] Cf. *Il.* 3.180, 18.396, *Od.* 4.145, 8.319; then Eur. *El.* 1252, *Or.* 260.

[58] 11 times in Homer; Bacch. fr. incert. 6; Eur. *Cycl.* 277; Pl. *Ion* 533c.

("having a rolling gait", Eup. fr. 174.3),[59] the epic verbs ἀμφηγάπαζες ("you used to embrace with love", Canth. fr. 7),[60] παραλέχομαι in τυρῷ καὶ μίνθῃ παραλεξάμενος καὶ ἐλαίῳ ("having slept with cheese, mint, and oil", Cratin. fr. 136),[61] ἐρέεινεν ("he asked for", Theop. fr. 31.2),[62] Empedoclean verb ἐξανατέλλω ("spring up from", Telecl. fr. 47),[63] the (conjectural) epic adverb ἄψ ("backwards", Epich. fr. 97.16),[64] the mainly epic particles αὐτάρ ("but, nevertheless", Herm. fr. 63.17)[65] and ἠΰτε ("like as", Ar. fr. 29.1),[66] the dative sing. form χήτει ("out of lack of", Eup. fr. 491),[67] the interjection τῆ followed by imperative ("there!", Cratin. fr. 145 and Eup. fr. 378).[68]

Another technique in working with epic vocabulary is to create 'new' epic words out of recognizable morphemes or to atticize Homeric words: to use Homeric vocabulary but Attic morphology for them. To such epicizing coinages belong γυναικάνδρεσσι ("for woman-men", Epich. fr. 224),[69] τερπότραμις ("perineum-delight", Telecl. fr. 72),[70] κεφαληγερέτης ("head-gatherer", Cratin. fr. 258.4),[71] πυροπίπης ("wheat-ogler", Cratin. fr. 484),[72] ἀχρειόγελως ("untimely-laughing", Cratin. fr. 360),[73] αἱμασιολογεῖν ("lay walls", Theop. fr. 73),[74] χλανίδες δ' οὖλαι ("wollen cloaks", Herm.

[59] 10 times in Homer, 2 times in *Homeric hymns*, 7 times in Hesiod, once in Empedocles, then in Eupolis.

[60] Cf. Il. 16.192, *Od.* 14.381, *h. Cer.* 290, 436.

[61] 7 times in Homer, once in *Homeric hymns*, 5 times in Hesiod. Then used once in Ibycus and once in Pindar.

[62] 18 times in Homer, 6 times in *Homeric hymns*, then in Theopompus.

[63] Only Emped. frs 61 and 62 31B DK. In Empedocles the word stands both times at the end of hexameter verse both times whilst in Teleclides it is at the end of anapaestic tetrameter.

[64] 112 times in Homer, 4 times in *Homeric hymns*, 4 times in Hesiod, and once in Sappho, then in Matro's epic parody (4th c. BCE).

[65] 770 times in Homer, 67 times in *Homeric hymns*, 50 times in Hesiod, 5 times in the Cyclic poems, 12 times in elegy and lyric, 2 times in Choerilus, 6 times in Empedocles, 4 times in Parmenides. 2 times in Aristophanes (*Pax* 1092 and *Av.* 983), both generically marked.

[66] 43 times in various epic texts (from which 31 times in Homer), once in Bacchylides.

[67] Cf. *Il.* 6.463, 19.324, *Od.* 16.35, *h. Ap.* 78; Hes. *Th.* 605; Her. 9.11.8; Pl. *Phdr.* 239d1.

[68] 7 times in Homer (cf. especially *Od.* 9.347), twice immediately followed by νῦν, as it further appears in Cratinus and Eupolis.

[69] On a list of 'epic-lyric' compound coinages found in Epicharmus, see Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012: 84.

[70] Cf. τερπικέραυνος *Il.* 1.419.

[71] Cf. νεφεληγερέτα as a constant epithet of Zeus 36 times in Homer, 3 times in *Homeric hymns*, 7 times in Hesiod, *Titanom.* fr. 5.2 Bernabé.

[72] Cf. παρθενοπίπης *Il.* 11.385.

[73] Cf. ἀχρεῖον δ' ἐγέλασσεν *Od.* 18.163.

[74] Cf. αἱμασιάς τε λέγων *Od.* 18.359 and αἱμασιὰς λέξοντες Od. 24.224.

fr. 48),[75] ὀπτότατός (“the best baked”, Cratin. fr. 150.4) recalling epic ὁπλότατος,[76] συκοπέδιλε (“you fig-sandaled” Cratin. fr. 70).[77]

6. Morphemes as Markers

The register identification can follow on the level of morphemes. Epic endings are marked in comic language, the markedness functioning especially in the case of the juxtaposition of the ‘elevated’ morphology versus ‘low’/’every-day’ vocabulary examples being genitive ending -οῖο in ἐκ βολβοῖο (Plat. Com. fr. 189.6), dative ending -φι in πασσαλόφιν (Herm. fr. 55.2), dative ending -εσσι and in -σσι in γυναικάνδρεσσι (Epich. fr. 224) and ποσσὶν (Cratin. fr. 107), dative ending -ῃσι in πίννῃσι (Cratin. fr. 8) and οἰνάνθῃσιν (Cratin. fr. 105.5), accusative plural υἷας (Theop. fr. 31.1).

Further indicators are the archaic Homeric lack of augment in past tense such as ἆγε (Epich. fr. 57), οὐ κήλησε and δῶκε (Theop. fr. 31.3-4), the poetic plural δώματα (Ar. fr. 279, Herm. fr. 63.1), δῶ for δῶμα (Herm. fr. 77.9), the 3rd sing. active subjunctive ending -σι in πίπτῃσι (Plat. fr. 168.5), the mid. voice ὁρῶμαι (Cratin. fr. 143.1), the part. pass. aor. dual. μιγέντε and the hist. pres. ind. act. 3rd dual. τίκτετον (Cratin. fr. 258), the pf. 3rd plur. ἐπιδέδρομεν from ἐπιτρέχω (Herm. fr. 77.3), tmesis in ὑπὸ γούνατα μισθοῦ ἔλυσαν (Metag. fr. 4.4).

7. Phonemes as Markers

No phonological sign by itself is enough to indicate epic register, as it can also be a signal for various other registers or dialects. But the co-occurrence of various markers, the combination of phonological markers with some other epic markers can be significant for decoding epic register in (fragmentary) texts.[78] Phonological markers can be the lack of contraction, such as in ἐτέοιν (Cratin. fr. 255), ἀείδει (Cratin. fr. 338), ἀείδειν (Eup. fr. 148.2) and καλέουσιν (Cratin. fr. 258.5; Hermipp. fr. 77.6), the lengthening of vowels such as in πετεηνῶν (Epich. fr. 150) and γούνατα (Metag. fr. 4.4);

[75] χλαίνας οὔλας in *Il.* 24.646, *Od.* 4.50, 10.451, 17.89. See Silk (2000: 307).

[76] 5 times in Homer, once in *Homeric hymns*, 11 times in Hesiod, *Naupact.* fr. 1.1 Bernabé, 2 times in Pindar. See Silk (2000: 305).

[77] Cf. χρυσυπέδιλος *Od.* 11.604 and Hesiod *Th.* 454, 952; fr. 229.9; Sappho fr. 103.13 and 123.1.

[78] E.g. see the cosmogony of birds (Ar. *Av.* 685-702) based on Hesiod, Empedocles and Orphic cosmogony and note the function of uncontracted endings in Ar. *Av.* 686. See Dunbar 1995 *ad loc.*

the double σσ instead of the Attic double ττ (usually used in comedy) as in θαλάσσης (Plat. fr. 189.11).

8. Names of Epic Poets in Comic Titles or Texts

Let us consider non-linguistic epic markers. Epic poets appear in a number of comic titles such as Teleclides' *Hesiodoi* (and later Nicostratus' *Hesiodos*) and Metagenes' *Homeros*. However, it is unclear whether a title (especially in the case of alternative titles) belongs to an author or is given at some later stage by a scribe, an archivist or a book-seller (Sommerstein 2002). What is clear is that such a title somehow reflects the content of the play which might have had the epic poet as a character or in the chorus. The epic theme is implicitly, even if no further epic indicators are found in the surviving fragments.

Further, epic poets may be referred to or named in the text. In such cases we find a reflection on the literary canon or a contribution to the creation of a canon. In Aristophanes (as everywhere else in the 5th c. BCE) Homer, Hesiod and other epic poets are mentioned as a great authority.[79] In Aristophanes' early comedy *Daitales* fr. 233 we find a discussion of Homeric vocabulary; Cratinus was said to mock Homer for the frequent use of a certain formula (fr. 355);[80] in Theopompus fr. 34 a Homeric simile is quoted, whilst Homer is referred to. All three may have been influenced by Homeric studies that were increasingly popular during the 5th c. BCE.

9. Para-Epic Mythological Titles

Further, there are many para-epic Sicilian titles such as Epicharmus' *Medeia*, *Odysseus Automolos*, *Odysseus navagos*, *Pyrrha kai Promatheus*, *Seirenes*, Phormus/Phormis' *Alkinous*, *Iliou porthesis ē Hippos*, Dinolochus' *Althaia*, *Kirka*, *Meleagros*. The plot was built in all probability on the epic material which was well-known to the audience. In the case of Attic comedy, however, the case is more complicated. When Epicharmus alludes to mythological themes, the direct source and target for his mythological par-

[79] Ar. *Nu.* 1056, *Pax* 1089-98, *Av.* 575, 910, 914, *Ra.* 1036-38. Other explicitly named epic poets occur in Aristophanes only in *Ra.* 1034-8. On Homer's authority in the 5th c. BCE, see Revermann 2013: 111 and 115 with further bibliography.

[80] Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 10.3.21: Ὁμήρου κωμῳδηθέντος ὑπὸ Κρατίνου διὰ τὸ πλεονάσαι ἐν τῷ τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος. τὸν/τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος ("and he answered him/her") appears in Homer 110 times always at the beginning of the verse. It remains open, however, whether Cratinus referred to Homer explicitly or implicitly. Cf. also Cratinus' *Archilochoi*, where Homer might have been a protagonist (frs. 2 and 6, cf. D. L. 1.12).

ody would seem to be epic.[81] When, however, Attic comic playwrights compose their comedies based on a mythological plot, the first direct target of parody would seem to be tragedy rather than epic. In many cases it is simply impossible to be sure whether the title alludes to an epic or to a tragedy which had already reworked the epic material. Still, epic remained an important source for comedy, with the evident popularity of mythological burlesque continuing down into the classical period, examples being Cratinus' *Odysseis*, Diocles' and Callias' *Cyclopes*, Theopompus' *Odysseus*, *Penelope* and *Seirenes*, Nicophontes' *Seirenes*.[82]

10. Epic Quotation as a Marker

Numerous epic quotations are found in the comic corpus, some of them being exact quotations, and some being altered in some way.[83] Epicharmus in his play *Pyrrha kai Promatheus* (fr. 113.415) quoted the Iliad with some Doric alterations.[84] Cratinus quoted Homer in his *Pylaia* with some alteration in hexameter verses. The verses are corrupt, and in what survives no parodic sign is shown (fr. 183).[85] Hermippus starts his long catalogue of goods written in hexameter with the first verse of the Homeric catalogue of ships, both initiating a long enumeration (fr. 63.1).[86] In the following examples epic quotations are found in comic texts, altered in various ways but still clearly recognizable. One crucial word is usually changed in order to make the heroic verse sound comically. Thus Epicharmus in his *Hēbas gamos* gave comic names to the parents of the 'muses' Πίερος (cf. πιαρός "fat") and Πιμπληΐ̈ς ("fulfilled"), the muses' names corresponding to river names in Homer and Hesiod (fr. 39).[87]

Cratinus uses the technique of quotation. In his incerta two verses from Hesiod's *Works and days* are quoted almost verbatim (fr. 349).[88] The imperative construction of the sentence, the vocabulary and the same phrase ὄφρα σε λιμὸς ἐχθαίρῃ ("that [h]unger may hate you", trans. H.G. Eve-

[81] On Epicharmus' engagement with epic tradition, see Cassio 2002: 70-80 and Willi 2008: 176-91.

[82] On the 'epic' titles of tragedies and on corresponding comic titles, see Revermann 2013: 114-15.

[83] The classical example of a precise quotation is the recitation by Lamachus' son of the *Epigonoi* verses at the very end of Aristophanes' *Peace*.

[84] Cf. *Il.* 9.63. Cf. Ar. *Pax* 1097-8.

[85] Cf. *Il.* 9.494-5. Cf. also *Il.* 1.341, 398, 456, 9.495, 16.32.

[86] See *Il.* 2.484. The same verse occurs in the *Iliad* further 3 more times: *Il.* 11.218, 14.508, 16.112. In Hesiod the same verse occurs slightly altered: Hes. Th. 114.

[87] See *Il.* 12.20 and Hes. *Th.* 338-41. See also Willi 2015: 130.

[88] Cf. Hes. *Op.* 299-300.

lyn-White in *Hesiod* 1914: 25) is retained from Hesiod, though the names and some forms (φιλέῃ for φιλήσει, ἐυστέφανος Δημήτηρ for Κοννᾶς πολυστέφανός) are changed as well as the crucial ἐργάζευ, in Hesiod, which is substituted for ἔσθιε by Cratinus. The quotation remains clearly recognizable.

In another uncertain fragment of Cratinus, the Homeric verse is quoted in toto with the last emphatic bird-name κύμινδιν changed to κύβηλιν ("cheese-scraper, cheese-grater", fr. 352).[89] In Cratinus' verse an additional level of understanding is introduced. Cratinus parodies a verse from Homer where Sleep turns himself into a bird, "which the gods call chalkis, but men kymindis". Cratinus keeps the dactylic hexameter, but takes χαλκίς to mean "brazen pot".[90]

A similar technique is used by Metagenes in an uncertain comedy. The Homeric verse is quoted verbatim with the emphatic πάτρης at the end of the line being changed for δείπνου (fr. 19).[91]

Pherecrates in his Cheiron parodied Homeric lines (fr. 159).[92] In the *Iliad* Agamemnon promised Achilles seven Lesbian women greatly skilled in handiwork, a phrase that here too is changed for obscene comic purpose. In the same comedy Hesiod is quoted in hexameter verses (fr. 162.1).[93]

Aristophanes in the *Daitalēs* was said to mock a verse from the lost Χείρωνος ὑποθῆκαι (*Precepts of Chiron*), a didactic poem written in hexameter and ascribed to Hesiod in the 5th c. BCE (fr. 239).[94] Epicharmus paraphrased Homer in his *Odysseus automolos* (fr. 97.14-16).[95] Theopompus' *Odysseus* fr. 34 emphasizing Homeric simile, as mentioned above, provides a more complex mechanism of quotation.[96] The comparison of a tunic to an onionskin is taken from the *Odyssey* (the cloak that Penelope had given Odysseus). The intertextuality works here as an epic marker. The quotation has been incorporated into the text on the contextual level. More importantly, this is one of the rare cases when the comic playwright explicitly states that he is quoting Homer. The crucial word χιτών is kept and its comparison to an onionskin is also retained, the Homeric form changed in-

[89] Cf. *Il.* 14.291.

[90] Hesych. (4380) on κύβηλις.

[91] Cf. *Il.* 12.243.

[92] Cf. *Il.* 9.270-1. Cf. *Il.* 9.128-9.

[93] Cf. Hes. *Op.* 342. Cf. also *Il.* 7.475, *Od.* 3.420, 15.74, *h. Merc.* 480.

[94] Cf. Hes. fr. 284 M.-W. Cratinus' comedy *Cheirones* might have alluded to the same poem (fr. 253): σκῆψιν μὲν Χείρωνες ἐλήλυμεν ὡς ὑποθήκας ("the plea we Chirons have come for precepts"). On the *Precepts of Chiron* see Cingano 2009: 128-9.

[95] Cf. *Il.* 10: 211-12. See Cassio 2002: 78-80; on the differences in Homeric and Epicharmean plot, see also Willi 2012: 69-73.

[96] Cf. *Od.* 19.232-3.

to Attic (κρομμύου λεπυχάνῳ for κρομύοιο λοπὸν κάτα ἰσχαλέοιο).

Quotations from epic poetry signal register-switching and thus serve as clear epic markers within comic texts. Reference to known epic texts, the introduction of everyday or obscene words in the place of elevated or heroic words, the use of epic contexts on stage and any number of combinations of these create situations characterised by a clash of the 'expected' and of the 'unexpected', the 'in place' and the 'displaced'.

11. Narrative Outset as a Marker

The narrative framework is also significant for decoding generic register, a good example being the use of a catalogue, as mentioned above. On the comic stage an epic catalogue of war-ships is replaced by a catalogue of types of hetaeras,[97] of goods,[98] of seafood,[99] or of cook ingredients in a gastronomic cook book.[100] Other examples could the use of war-epic[101] or cosmological narrative at the outset.[102] Epic narrative structures may also be used on a small scale and be formulated within one sentence, as in the 'I shall start with X and conclude with Y' in ἄρξομαι ἐκ βολβοῖο, τελευτήσω δ' ἐπὶ θύννον ("I shall start with bulb and conclude with tuna-fish", Plat. fr. 189).[103] The co-occurrence of different markers is significant here, the Homeric morphological forms, vocabulary, and dactylic hexameter, as they all contribute to the decoding of epic register.

12. Conclusion

Many difficulties and dilemmas in the interpretation of epic markers remain unsolved. The analysis of (the not that many) para-epic and para-oracular passages in extant Aristophanes' comedies reveals that the usual pattern of epic-oracular discourse is a linguistically marked cultural authority who is appealed to by a comic character in order to control a situation (cf. Lysistrata (*Lys.* 770-7), Paphlagon (*Eq.* 1015-95), Hierocles (*Pax* 1063-126) or Oracle-seller (*Av.* 959-91)); in Aristophanes' *Peace* too a famous para-epic scene takes place (*Pax* 1268-301) (Platter (2007: 108-42).).

[97] Metag. fr. 4.

[98] Herm. fr. 63.

[99] Epich. frs 40, 47, 53-58. On specific markers of a catalogue such as ἆγε "he/she brought", ἦν "there were", or ἵκοντο, see Willi 2015: 129-30.

[100] Plat. fr. 189.

[101] Herm. fr. 48. See Silk 2000: 307.

[102] Cratin. frs 258-259. Cf. Ar. *Av.* 685-702 on the cosmogony of birds.

[103] Cf. *Il.* 9.97.

The linguistic markedness should be recognisable to the audience. The interlocutor then undermines this authoritative position interrupting and/ transforming this discourse via a change of register. Thus the gravity of epic diction is undermined and emphasized at the same time by opposing it to everyday diction.

As has been noted above, in the comic fragments, in contrast to the extent eleven comedies, it is the epic-oracular markedness that takes on the role of the missing context. In order to understand and interpret a fragment, linguistic markers should thus be considered of central significance.

A crucial difficulty is that it is almost always impossible to distinguish between real epic quotations and verses made-by-playwrights, except in those cases when the original model on which the verse is based survives. As we have seen above, it is hardly possible to distinguish between parody and simple quotation in comic text. The simple quotation may often be included in a broader parodic context. Further, it is almost impossible to distinguish between epic and oracular hexameter verses unless some specific formulaic expressions are employed. Nevertheless, some significant conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, epic markers cause disturbances in the linguistic field of comic diction. Their effect lies in producing an artificial elevation of language creating an ironic gap with the general tone of the scene or with the speech-style of the particular character. Secondly, there is no unified epic register, but there are epic elements highlighted in various contexts. Within epic text itself there could be Homeric epic which is different from the Hesiodic or Cyclic poems. Thirdly, the markedness is characterized and decoded through co-occurrence patterns, sets of pointers, (almost) none of which can be referred to exclusively one register. Finally, register-switching proves the awareness of comic playwrights of linguistic norms and variations, thus the analysis of epic-oracular markers increases our knowledge of linguistic standards and reflection on registers in the 5th century BCE Sicily and Athens (Willi 2010: 303).

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The Deliverymen of Florentine Comedy: 1543-1555

Abstract

Renaissance Italian comedy is often accused of banality the more the sixteenth century pushes forward. Tireless re-workings of recognizable plots and themes – from Athens and Rome, Boccaccio's stories, Machiavelli's theater, and Ariosto's, too – are all too common in the proliferation of printed editions, of literary circles, and of amateur dramaturges themselves. However, in mid-sixteenth century Florence, several members of the Florentine Academy, including Giovanni Battista Gelli, Francesco D'Ambra, and Giovanni Maria Cecchi, signal innovation in the compendium of familiar storylines as they stage lively urban environments and change in the make-up of society. Building on work of Virginia Cox and Sarah G. Ross, I view this brand of Florentine comedy as one that unlocks the door to ordinary realities and "everyday renaissances" of the period. This study observes the novelty of quotidian Florence in the onstage portrayals of the *zanaiuolo*, a deliveryman of predominantly foodstuffs, in Academy dramas. Purveyors who work as contractually employed individuals are an unusual social class of culinary workers who act *and interact* on their own accord. Although deliverymen are liminal to the core action of the drama, I argue that they demonstrate a playwright's willingness to stage *speculum consuetudinis*. The simple inclusion of a deliveryman in the character list demonstrates sixteenth-century Florence (and its comedy) to be a locus of developing municipal professions. Their language and interaction reveal to us the dynamics of cultural exchange and developing residential and commercial areas of the city. Moreover, their presence on stage confirms the ideology of their creators, who are dedicated to rendering literature and theater accessible to a larger audience of upper-middle class artisans and intellectuals such as themselves. In this article, I prove how peculiar deliverymen stand as examples of cultural encounter and mobility in the urban cityscape of sixteenth-century Florence.

Keywords: Renaissance Italian comedy; Florence; deliverymen; Giovanni Battista Gelli; Giovanni Maria Cecchi

Renaissance Italian comedy has often been accused of banality the more the sixteenth century pushes forward. Tireless re-workings of recognizable plots and themes – from Athens and Rome, Boccaccio's stories, Mach-

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iavelli's theater, and Ariosto's, too – are all too common in the proliferation of printed editions, of literary circles, and of amateur dramaturges themselves. However, in mid-sixteenth-century Florence, several members of the Florentine Academy, including Giovanni Battista Gelli, Francesco D'Ambra, Anton Francesco Grazzini (Il Lasca), and Giovanni Maria Cecchi, drawn upon the municipal consciousness of their work by dedicating more space to images of contemporary peoples and customs. This study observes one such example of novelty in the onstage portrayals of the *zanaiuolo*, a deliveryman. The culinary workers are depicted as contractually employed individuals who represent a new group of food purveyors, acting and interacting freely in society. Although they are liminal to the core action of the drama, a new figure for the cast signals innovation among familiar storylines and speaks to the make-up of Florentine society, cultural identity, and mobility.

Building on the recent work of Virginia Cox and Sarah G. Ross and integrating its perspective into Renaissance theatre studies, I view this brand of Florentine comedy as one that unlocks the door to multiple voices and more modest, "everyday" renaissances of the period. On stage and in society, Florence is shown to be a locus of developing urban professions. In fact, the language and interaction of deliverymen suggest the dynamics of identity and cultural exchange as well as developing residential and commercial areas of the city. In this article, I will present three examples of zanaiuoli in comedies by Giovan Battista Gelli and Giovanni Maria Cecchi. I argue that the mere presence of deliverymen with speaking roles in the cast demonstrates the value of a closer look at mid sixteenth-century Florentine comedy, and it confirms the dedication of their creators to rendering literature and theater accessible to a larger audience of upper-middle class artisans and intellectuals such as themselves. Ultimately, I will suggest that the interactions of these understudied deliverymen stand as examples of cultural encounter and mobility in the urban cityscape of sixteenth-century Florence.

Indeed, the theatre of the Florentine Academy under Cosimo I combines its desire to innovate with its admiration of the past by faithfully following the creed of Cicero handed down by Donatus: *comoedia est imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*. Florentine Academy dramaturges' own status as members of a growing upper middle, merchant, artisan, and scholarly class emancipated them, to a certain degree, from writing comedy intended exclusively for the Medici court (even though generally sponsored by the family and its network), and it gave them access to raw material for a dynamic representation of the ordinary realities of the city. While Florence's representative arts under Lorenzo the Magnificent and his grandson Cosimo I are largely remembered for their lavish festivities and "high cul-

ture", ceremonial court spectacles, there were undoubtedly many more inconspicuous agents of cultural and economic development in the growing urban areas of the peninsula. As Virginia Cox has recently pointed out, the Renaissance stands on the backs of many men and women who participated in quieter ways in the all-encompassing renewal of classical culture and the innovation that carried forth into the century to follow (2016: 1-2). Sara Mamone points to this underlying current of Florentine theatre in the works of the seventeenth-century academies and confraternities who are tied to the fluidity of civil life and who put the entire community on display (2004: 18-19). Mamone assesses the production of religious and intellectual groups under Cosimo II and Ferdinand II, while I find reason to reevaluate the work of Florentine Academy members, Gelli and Cecchi, through the figure of the *zanaiuolo*. Sarah G. Ross has also recently investigated the phenomenon that she entitles *Everyday Renaissances* by surveying the drive of more modest Venetian citizens for learning and literature. She states:

> Scholars and broader audiences alike now tend to level charges of elitism at "the Renaissance" as a cultural phenomenon, and with some justice. . . . Yet *Everyday Renaissances* claims that ordinary people also participated energetically in culture, and that attending to them offers a sharper picture of the era's intellectual and literary ferment. (2016: 1)

This fresh perspective on the significance and development of the Renaissance in Venice also unlocks the door to mid-century Florentine Academy dramaturges interested in divulgating learned materials and in staging the lesser-known professions considered in this study.

The *zanaiuolo* is a core example of originality in the form of *speculum consuetudinis*. The *zanaiuolo* is a declared profession in the census data, the *Descritione delle bocche di Firenz*e, of 1562. In the four historic neighborhoods, there are sixteen individuals identifying as deliverymen and the widow of a late professional (ASF, Misc. medicea, 1562, busta 224). An intuitive etymological definition of a *zanaiuolo* is one who, by profession, carries a wooden basket strapped to the back; *zana*, a small wooden basket, and -*aiuolo*, a typical suffix given to professions, is a compound term readily understood also by recalling the contemporary Italian word zaino denoting a 'backpack'. Although zana is a word of Lombard origin, in current Italian dictionaries it is considered an obsolete word of Tuscan vernaculars and is found with an orthographic change (*zanaiolo*). One reputable dictionary, Lo Zingarelli, defines the profession as "chi portava merci a domicilio con la zana" [the person who would bring goods to the home with a chest]. The *Grande Dizionario Italiano* of the editor Hoepli echoes the definition of Zingarelli with non-descriptive merci as the goods frequently car-

ried by *zanaiuoli*, while a third contemporary source Garzanti Linguistica has eliminated the term from its publications. Historically, the Accademia della Crusca maintained the term in its printed dictionaries into the eighteenth century. In the fourth edition (1729-1738) of the *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, the definition of the term lo *zanaiuolo* reads: "colui, che prezzolato provvede, e porta altrui colla zana robe per lo più da mangiare" (he, who for a fee, brings to others with his basket things above all to eat).

Editors of Florentine theatre and *novella* have defined and interpreted lo zanaiuolo in various ways. Gaetano Milanesi's 1856 Le Monnier edition of Giovan Maria Cecchi's comedies insists that the zanaiuolo is a "facchino che porta pesi e robe colla zana" (a porter who brings items that weigh and [other] things with a chest) (1953: 144). In a glossary accompanying the theatre of Anton Francesco Grazzini, il Lasca, lo *zanaiuolo* is understood by Giovanni Grazzini as a *vivandiere* ("a seller of meats") (630).[1] In Chiara Cassiani's monographic volume on Giovan Battista Gelli, she describes a *zanaiuolo* as a *forestiero*, who does the job of a *facchino* and may cook in the homes of others (2006: 250). This definition mirrors that of the *Dizionario della lingua italiana* compiled by Niccolò Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini which offers the definition of the Accademia della Crusca but adds "e anche talvolta le [robe per lo più da mangiare] cucinava" ("and also at times he cooked them [things above all to eat]").[2] In line with these definitions and

[1] Giovanni Grazzini is the sole editor of the works of il Lasca. However, he thanks Bruno Migliorini in the preface to the glossary for his invaluable assistance and advice defining some terms. Given its obscure nature, I strongly believe *zanaiuolo* to be one of the terms with which Migliorini assisted.

[2] This definition is found in the *Tommaseo Online* of the Accademia della Crusca and the Editor Zanichelli. The entry also contains reference to a Tuscan proverb "Chi ha da essere zanajuolo nasce col manico in mano" and a note from the nineteenth-century philologist Pietro Fanfani who recalls that "D'Ambra chiama *Zanajuolo* (Bernard. att. V. scen. IX.), quello che altrove ha chiamato Cuoco." In the *Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua italiana* edited by Manlio Cortelazzo and Paolo Zolli "zanaiuolo" is not an entry but can be found referenced under the word "zanni" as the similarity in the two words quickly comes to mind. However, a relationship between *zanaiuoli* of Florentine Academy comedies and the Zanni of *Commedia dell'arte* is tenuous because the supposed etymology of 'zanni' speaks to the Venetian dialect as the dictionary suggests (1979: 1846). Still it is tempting to consider the *zanaiuolo* and the *Zanni* of the *Commedia dell'arte* as natural brothers. However, I lack any conclusive evidence that would suggest that the two are one in the same in evolution. A *zanaiuolo* is not a servant of a single *padrone* and is highly associated with foodstuffs, but not insatiable hunger. Furthermore, the zanaiuolo is a profession declared by members of the community in the 1562 census, whereas, when I have found *zanni* as a profession – for example in Tommaso Garzoni's *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* – he is clearly a stage actor or buffon. For references to the *zanaiuolo* as profession, I should also mention a letter

in order to capture the culinary aspect of his work, I have elected to translate zanaiuolo as deliveryman.[3]

Through a close textual study, I will examine three depictions of deliverymen in differing circumstances to provide the breadth of their interactions.[4] I consider their exchanges on stage within a tendency towards mirror images of society and their realistic implications. Franco Fido has noticed Gelli and his contemporaries' particular keenness for contemporary culture, which they embed into classical structure and flavor. Reflecting on Gelli's prologue of *La sporta*, Fido confirms: "Gelli not only accepts the Latin definition [of *comedia*], but is well aware of its, so to say, realistic implications: and this, we shall see, truly corresponds to the interest in everyday life that we find in several Florentine comedies, by Gelli, Lasca, and Cecchi, toward the middle of the century" (86). Of course, comedies, and mirrors, also distort images and examples of budding stereotypes and probable exaggerations will be drawn out. And while it is my intent to prove a zanaiuolo ultimately different from typical servants, I look to the stile comico of a fixed scene, of stylized encounters among *padroni* and *servi*, to evaluate these differences.

The Comedies of Giovan Battista Gelli

Giovan Battista Gelli, a well-known scholar-artisan of sixteenth-century Florence, included a *zanaiuolo* in *La sporta* in 1543 and *Lo errore* in 1555. For much of his life, Gelli held the two vocations of shoemaker (*calzaiuolo*) by day, and member of the literati at the Florentine Academy in the evening, obtaining reputable positions of power within the Academy ranks and in Florentine political life as a member of the Twelve Good Men. He was censor of the Academy three times; in 1548 he became consul and, in

of Machiavelli's to Francesco Vettori and one of Michelangelo Buonarroti to his brother from 1507.

[3] I believe porter is an acceptable translation for *facchino* although some translators may use bellhop. If we were to imagine today's cosmopolitan and urban areas another option may be a runner. My choice of deliveryman is the first and only translation into English at this time. All translations from Italian to English are my own. The works of Gelli, D'Ambra, Cecchi's that I consider have never been translated nor has the critical work of the scholars cited in Italian in this paper.

[4] As more and more older editions are digitized, I find more inclusions and mentions of deliverymen. To date I have found the following occurences: Giovan Battista Gelli's *La sporta* and *Lo errore*, Francesco D'Ambra's *I Bernardi*, Giovanni Maria Cecchi's *L'ammalata*, *Le cedole*, *La serpe*, Anton Francesco Grazzini's *La spiritata* and *Le cene*, in a comedy by Lionardo Salviati, another Academy member, as well as in some Tuscan proverbs and in the letters mentioned previously.

1553, by will of the Grand Duke Cosimo I, he delivered and published in-depth commentaries on the first 26 cantos of the *Inferno*. The idea that even the shoemaker in Florence is a man of letters was exactly the reputation Florence enjoyed during the Renaissance and into the following centuries.[5] The majority of Gelli's posthumous success stems from his two dialogical works: *I capricci del bottaio* and the *Circe*; yet his talent for popular speech and themes can be seen across his production, no doubt aided by the rich life experiences afforded by his double role of artisan and scholar. It is not a surprise that his work in comedy follows Roman models, but we also find in it consistent originality in the figure of the deliveryman.

Gelli's first comedy *La Sporta* (1543) is modeled on Plautus' *Aulularia*. Throughout the play Ghirigoro, a desperately avaricious old man who refuses to marry his only daughter to a man of higher class for fear of future financial obligations, is subjected to ridicule. All members of the cast are aware that his only concern is sufficiently protecting his *sporta*, a wooden chest of money, from external and in-house threats. This foolish behavior guarantees him mockery from all sides, including from the *zanaiuolo* Polo and a servant, Berto. Alongside Berto, Polo arrives at the home of Ghirigoro in order to deliver and cook goods for a dinner offered by Lapo, another nobleman of the drama.

Notwithstanding its classical model, *La sporta*'s *zanaiuolo* should stem from the observation of customs contemporary to Gelli. No traces of the location of a performance or the company of actors are easily found, yet in the dedicatory letter of the published drama, Gelli attempts to respond to criticisms that he states were made during a performance and to have read the comedy to Cosimo I. The criticisms have little bearing on the figure of the zanaiuolo aside from the language that Gelli employs in the drama, which will be discussed later. Thus the zanaiuolo Polo appears in Act Four for three scenes in which he initially satisfies his terms of employment by bringing food to Ghirigoro's home with the intent to prepare it there.[6] The

[5] In his monograph on Gelli and the Florentine Academy, Armand De Gaetano explains that Gelli purposefully decided to remain an artisan in order to sustain economic independence: "He could, like others with less ability, have found steady employment at the court of the Medici, but he refused to do more than occasional services for it… Furthermore Gelli believed that manual work was edifying" (1976: 33). In the *Capricci* Gelli does not fail to mention with pride ancient authors who also exercised a trade, or an *arte*. De Gaetano also references others artisan-scholars, like Gelli, to come out of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Renaissance culture: Michele Capri of Florence; Jacopo *sellaio* of Bologna; a shoemaker in Venice; Camerino *legnajuolo*, a Florentine carpenter; and Matteo Palmieri, a merchant and statesman.

[6] The *zanaiuolo*'s culinary trade and talent in the kitchen is made clear in these two scenes. If it were still unclear, Berto even calls Polo a "cook" in conversation with Brigida, Ghirigoro's servant, in scene three: "Piglia queste cose, e andate sù, tu e questo cuo-

scene establishes Polo's role and ranking among the characters of the comedy and in the Florentine community as represented on stage. While arriving at Ghirigoro's home with Lapo's servant, Polo seizes the opportunity to retell the mocking made of Ghirigoro at the market and the way he is known there:

POLO	Berto, non disse il tuo padrone, se io intesi bene, che noi portassimo a casa Ghirigoro de' Macci suo suocero queste cose e le cocessimo quivi?
BERTO	Sì, disse. Perché?
POLO	Egli ha tolto la figliuola per moglie, eh?
BERTO	Tu vedi, Polo.
POLO	Oh! non ha egli il modo, cotesto vecchio, a fare una cena da sé, senza che 'l genero vi abbia a pensare?
BERTO	Sì, credo io; ma egli è il più avaro uomo di Firenze.
POLO	Ah! Ah! Egli è quel vecchio che vien qualche volta in mercato con quella sportellina sotto che pare uno famiglio della grascia, e è tanto vantaggioso, che non truova ortolano né beccaio che gli voglia vendere, anzi tutti lo cacciano, faccendogli le baie?
BERTO	Sì, sì, cotesto è esso.
POLO	Oh! e' si chiama degli Omacci in mercato, non de' Macci. (4.2)

[POLO Berto, hasn't your master said, if I understood well, that we should bring to the home of Ghirigoro de' Macci's his father-in-law these things and to cook them there? / BERTO Yes, he said that. Why? / POLO He has taken the daughter for a wife, eh? / BERTO You understand, Polo. / POLO Oh! He has no way, this old man, to prepare a dinner himself, without his son-in-law taking care of it? / BERTO Yes, I think so; but he is the greediest man in Florence. / POLO Ah! Ah! He is that old man who comes to the market sometimes with that small wooden chest under him that seems to be a servant of a chunky woman, and he's so interested in taking advantage of others, that he cannot find vegetable vendor or butcher who wants to sell to him, what's more they all send him away, mocking him at his back. / BERTO Yes, yes, that is him. / POLO Oh! and he's called of the Omacci in the market, not de' Macci.]

From Polo's descriptions, the audience gains a mental image of these out-of-scene moments. Ghirigoro, with his little chest under his arm, is turned

co, e mettete in ordine da cena per alle due ore" (4.3). Italics are mine. This use of *cuoco* would confirm what Tommaseo and Bellini report of P. Fanfani's mention of Francesco using the two terms interchangeably.

away by all vendors of vegetables and meat alike, who mock him for his greedy nature. Surely the scene provided comic relief as is common of mini-plots and side action, especially in the *topos* of interaction between a *padrone* and a servile character. The deliveryman is striking because he is not only the creator of satire and not the object, but also not a servant of a specific household debating his master. This role, along with his use of the Florentine *idioma*, carves out a special place for him socially and will distinguish him from other *zanaiuoli.*

Polo's ideas of larger career plans also distinguish him from other *zanaiuoli.* He could own a shop at the market. He would achieve this goal through a scheme of suspect ethical character that he has seen others accomplish:

Berto	. . . E credo, Polo, che gli abbia de' danari; ché io ho conosciuti delli altri così fatti come è egli, che poi alla morte se n'è lor trovato qualche buon gruzzolo.
Polo	Se io piglio sua pratica, io voglio a ogni modo vedere se e' mi vuol prestare dieci ducati, per aprir anch'io un poco di treccone in mercato vecchio.
Berto	Sì, tu hai trovato l'uomo! Io non credo che ti prestasse la fame, quando bene è se la potesse spiccar da dosso.
Polo	Tu la intendi male, Berto; ché questi simili si giungono più facilmente che gli altri, come si mostra loro qualche poco d'utile. E' ne viene un altro in quel mercato, che non vi è pizzicagnolo né treccone né beccaio quasi che non abbia danari di suo: e dànnogli ogni dì qualcosa, e 'l capitale sta fermo. Così vo' fare io con lui.[7] (4.2)

[Berto I think, Polo, that he has some money; because I learned of others who are like him, that then at death, they have found a good handful of money. / Polo If I can get close to him, I want at any rate to see if he wants to lend me ten ducati to open for myself too a small shop at the old market. / Berto Yes, you have found your man! I think he would let you starve even when he could help you. / Polo You have misunderstood, Berto; because these men are more easily reached than others, if you show them a little something useful. Another one comes to that market, that there almost isn't a spice vendor or a small foods vendor or butcher who doesn't have some of his money: and giving him every day something, the capital remains intact. This is how I want to handle with him.]

[7] Sanesi notes that *treccone*, as indicated by Tommaseo and Bellini, is a *rivendugliolo*, that is, a 'rivenditore di cose commestibili di poco prezzo'. I've chosen to attempt to translate *treccone* as a small foods vendor, that is, a vendor of food items that have little value and small cost

The scheme plotted by Polo, and presumably others, is intriguing because of its timeless appeal in dealing with credit lenders: offer a little something every day and your capital remains in place. That the deliveryman would seize this opportunity to play on Ghirigoro's supposed foolishness should not shock us. After all, he is simply looking to take advantage of the situation in order to gain a storefront for himself. In fact, the quality of virtù or astuteness valued by Early Modern Florentine society in literature and comedy is well documented.[8] What is important instead is his link to the market area and the seemingly mobile society in which the *zanaiuolo* lives; he can aspire to become a shop owner, and he has seen others do it too.

Polo's direct interaction with Ghirigoro confirms that the deliveryman's social position is more flexible than one might expect. When Polo asks Brigida, Ghirigoro's servant, to hand him the sporta he has brought with him, Ghirigoro hears them from the street and rushes in fearing that he has been discovered. When Ghirigoro threatens Polo, he leaves the old man's home as directed. However, he defends himself against a man of supposedly higher social standing and speaks of his excellent reputation in the community:

Ghirigoro	Fuora, fuora, assassino, ladro, io ti farò impiccare. Sì che è si va così per le case d'altri, eh? Di che cercavi tu sotto quella scala, che non vi sta se non spazzatura? Ribaldo, che credevi tu trovarvi?
Polo	Cercava delle legne per cuocer quelle cose che io ho recate, che le manda il vostro genero.
Ghirigoro	Io non so che genero, io; anzi, cercavi d'imbolarmi qualcosa.
Polo	Ghirigoro, io non fui mai ladro, e vo tutto 'l dì per le case deg-

[8] In their Introduction to *Five Comedies from the Italian Renaissance*, Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero state: "In some comedies . . . the characters who display the most virtù are, suggestively, not male members of the upper classes but servants like Fessenio, men of lesser standing on the make like Ligurio, and women like Lelia or Santilla. This may be simply because virtù was expected of upper-class men and thus was funnier and more interesting to imagine in its lack than in its presence among such individuals. In turn, the power of virtù is clearly more visible and telling when we see it working where one would normally not expect it: in servants, men of lesser standing, and young women . . . Of course, the plot lines of these plays were often drawn from ancient comedies or Renaissance popular stories, both of which genres typically featured clever servants and the weak triumphing over the strong. But from their central role in these comedies it is clear that these themes had special resonance in the sixteenth century as well. The centrality of these themes in Renaissance comedy may also reflect deeper tensions in the period such as an increasing sense of powerlessness in the upper classes related to political and social changes associated with foreign domination and the rise of a more courtly society" (2003: xxiv).

	li uomini da bene a cuocere, e sono conosciuto; e non mi avete da dir cotesto.
Ghirigoro	Tu m'hai inteso: lievamiti dinanzi, ché io ti spezzerò la testa, ladroncello.
	. . .
Berto	Ohimè, Ghirigoro, che vuol dire questo?
Ghirigoro	Come, che vuol dire? Costui che m'ha mandata tutta la casa sozzopra.
Berto	Oh! ei ve l'ha mandato a cuocere Lapo vostro, per farvi onore.
	. . .
Ghirigoro	Io t'ho detto. Io ho una serva che sa fare da sé. Andatevi tutt'a dua con Dio …
Polo	Lasciatemi almen tornar in casa per la mia zana e per la mia sporta.
Ghirigoro	Et anche questo non farò. Pàrti ch'ei l'avesse pensata? Aspettami qui, ché te le arrecherò io.
Berto	Polo, che ti par di questo vecchio? Riescet'egli come io ti dissi?
Polo	Io, per me, non viddi mai il più arrabbiato. E me ne par esser ito bene, che non mi ha rotto la testa.
	(4.5)

[Ghirigoro Out, out, assassin, thief, I will have you hung. So it's like this that one goes to the homes of others, eh? Say: what you were searching for under those stairs, where there's nothing if not trash? Ribald, what were you hoping to find there? / Polo I was looking for some wood to cook those things that I have brought here, those that your son-in-law has sent. / Ghirigoro I don't know what son-in-law; instead, you were trying to hide something from me. / Polo Ghirigoro, I have never been a thief, and I go all day long in the homes of good men to cook, and I am well-known; and you shouldn't tell me this. / Ghirigoro You've understood me: get out of my sight, because I will smash your head in, you little thief. / . . . / Berto Ohimè, Ghirigoro, what it is meaning of this? / Ghirigoro How, what do you mean? This one that he sent me has turned my house upside down. / Berto Oh! Your (son-in-law) Lapo has sent him to you to cook, to honor you. / . . . / Ghirigoro I've told you. I have a servant that knows how to handle things on her own. Both of you leave here in peace. / Polo Let me at least return inside to retrieve my basket and my wooden chest. / Ghirigoro I won't let you do this either. You think I haven't thought about it? Wait for me there, and I will bring them to you. / Berto Polo, what did you think about this old one? Was he like I've told you? / Polo I, for myself, have never seen a more angry man. And it seems to me that it has gone well that he hasn't broken my head open.]

Polo remains unharmed by the anger and speech of Ghirigoro and is defended by his friend, Berto. In the end, Polo's market-stall scheme presumably fails as he is booted from Ghirigoro's home, but he is not a thief and will not be treated as one. In La sporta, the zanaiuolo appears to be a free agent of Florentine society, equipped with aspirations and culinary talent.

Gelli's second comedy *Lo errore* is stated to have been performed by the Compagnia de' Fantastici in Florence in 1555 at a dinner offered by Roberto di Filippo Pandolfini. The Fantastici's performance on this occasion is announced in the prologue as are the similarities to Machiavelli's *Clizia*: an older man, Gherardo, has fallen in love with a younger woman, Ginevra, wife of Averardo Tieri. In order to cover up his error he must facilitate a match between his son and the woman's daughter. In Lo errore the zanaiuolo is met on the street by Gherardo at the beginning of Act three. Unlike *La sporta*'s Polo, this deliveryman remains nameless. He is charged with bringing alimentary goods from the market to Gherardo's home and delivering a message to the old man's wife about preparing lunch. In this case, the conversation between Gherardo and the deliveryman develops from concerns about the amount of payment to patterns of insult and injury to the profession. Gherardo confirms a *zanaiuolo*'s association with carrying and cooking food, and then when prodded, he describes negatively the behaviors of those who practice the trade:

ZANAIUOLO Aggio facenna.
GHERARDO E dove vai?
ZANAIUOLO In Via Pentolini.
GHERARDO Oh! odi: tu puoi fare un viaggio e due servigi.
ZANAIUOLO E come? Di' sù.
GHERARDO Posa anche queste cose in casa mia, ché sto quivi in quelle case nuove da Santo Ambruogio.
ZANAIUOLO Orsù, mette qua.
GHERARDO Sai tu il nome mio?
ZANAIUOLO Eh! Io ti conosco ben, sì, ché ti veddi l'altra sera quando ero a cuocere in casa Binno Bostichi.
GHERARDO Ah, sì, sì, Oh! tien qui; va' via.
ZANAIUOLO E che vuoi tu che faccia d'un quattrino?
GHERARDO E che vuoi tu? Che io ti dia una dote, che non rallunghi venti passi la via?
ZANAIUOLO Dammi tre quattrini, se vuoi che ci vada; se no, non ci voglio annare.
GHERARDO Io non me ne meraviglio, poi che tu di' che sei un di quel che vanno a cuocere.
ZANAIUOLO E che facciamo noi altri che anniamo a cuocere?
GHERARDO Cavate tanto, la prima cosa, da il pollaiolo, da il pizzicagnolo, da il treccone, e da tutti quegli da chi voi fate comperare le

cose; e, d' poi, rubate tanto, oltre lo aver trovato che i colli de' polli e le spezierie che avanzano hanno a essere vostre, nelle case ove voi entrate, che voi non stimate poi questi guadagnuzzi d'un quattrino.

Zanaiuolo Oh! ve' bella cosa che ha trovato questo vecchio.

Gherardo E io ti direi delle altre cose che tu non pensi che io sappia; ché vi beete in cucina, quando voi non siate veduti, insino alla peverada de' capponi, come si fa propriamente l'acqua d'orzo.

Zanaiuolo Te dirò; questo si fa per star sano.

Gherardo E tu vedi bene che voi altri che andate a cuocere avete certe carni fini e certi visi rossi che voi parete fanciulle lisciate; e non siate scuri, come questi altri che non attendono se non a far servigi.

(3.1, italics mine)

[Zanaiuolo I've got things to do. / Gherardo And where are you going? / Zanaiuolo In Via Pentolini. / Gherardo Oh! listen: you can make one trip and do two services. / Zanaiuolo And, how? Tell me now. / Gherardo Take also these things to my home, because I am near there in those new homes in Sant'Ambrogio. / Zanaiuolo Ok, let's go! Put it here. / Gherardo Do you know my name? / Zanaiuolo Eh! I know you well, yes, because I saw you the other evening when I was cooking in the home of Binno Bostichi. / Gherardo Ah, yes, yes, oh! Take this; go on. / Zanaiuolo And what do you want me to do with a quattrino? / Gherardo What do you want? That I give you a dowry, for something that doesn't lengthen your trip twenty feet? / Zanaiuolo Give me three quattrini, if you want me to go; if not, I don't want to. / Gherardo I'm not surprised, given that you say you are one of those who go to cook. / Zanaiuolo And what do we do those of us who go to cook? / Gherardo You take a lot, in the first place, from the poulterer, the spice vendor, from the small foods vendor, and from all of those from whom you buy things; and, then, you steal a lot, other than having taken the necks of chickens and the spices that are left over you take to be your own, in the homes in which you enter, and you don't consider small earnings of a quattrino. / Zanaiuolo Oh! well, what nice things this old man has found. / Gherardo And I'll tell you other things that you don't think I know; that you drink in the kitchen when you aren't seen, even at the pepper sauce of the capons, like one does properly with the water of orzo. / Zanaiuolo I'll tell you; this is done to stay healthy. / Gherardo And you see that you others that go to cook have certain fine skins and particular red faces that you seem glamorous young girls; and you are not dark-skinned, like these others that attend to performing services.]

Initially the *zanaiuolo* responds in a sarcastic manner to the accusations of Gherardo, noting, predictably, his age and the grand novelty of what the gentleman has said. When Gherardo mentions the custom of drinking

broth while preparing foods, the nameless deliveryman defends the tradition as healthy. After an allusive mention of complexion and delicate skin, he quickly ends the conversation accepting whatever payment Gherardo prefers. As the deliveryman walks the streets of Florence to perform his charge, he laments the lengthy conversation necessary to ensure employment. He arrives at Gherardo's home, delivering briefly and efficiently the goods and message of his employer. His service to the comedy is complete (3.1).

The *zanaiuolo* of *Lo errore* possesses a spirited character similar to Polo's of Gelli's *La sporta*. His vibrant exchange with Gherardo suggests the liberty and entrepreneurship of someone briefly employed by a gentleman. Not only is this zanaiuolo emancipated from the household and authority of one *padrone*, demonstrated by the fact that he takes temporary work in a casual street encounter, but also he negotiates payment. He chooses to complete the service for less than he had requested, but the conclusion to the scene is most likely motivated by expediency. It should not suggest that the deliveryman could not have obtained the sum for which he had asked; instead, the deliveryman's free license to discuss terms of service signifies mobility in social classes.

In the end, although maintaining a more flexible social position with respect to a stylized servant, the deliveryman is not safe from the criticism of Gherardo. Alongside stereotypes of kitchen workers, the striking new characteristic of this nameless zanaiuolo is his markedly Southern dialect. Chiara Cassiani, a Gellian scholar, suggests that the dialect in question is Neapolitan: "nell'*Errore* viene introdotto anche il dialetto napoletano di uno zanaiuolo che discute con Gherardo" (254n46). She contends that he speaks in Neapolitan by citing "io aggio disposto sei volte di non far loro servigi; e poi non me ne saccio guardare, che gli venga lo cancaro" (3.1). I agree with Cassiani that this deliveryman is surely from the Southern half of the peninsula because *saccio*, *aggio*, *annare* bespeak a southern vernacular, including the Neapolitan. Yet, with no further evidence to confirm the *zanaiuolo*'s speech as exclusively Neapolitan, I do not believe we can exclude other Southern dialects. Thirteen years after Gelli's first comedy, the traits of the *zanaiuolo* seem to have shifted. In the course of the act, he is berated for attributes and customs linked to an entire profession and to culinary trades more broadly. He is known to take things without permission from the kitchens in which he works; he drinks broth (and more) on the job. Lo zanaiuolo is no longer the author of ridicule, but the object of derision.[9] In

[9] Furthermore, he is scorned by the amorous *senex* of *Lo errore* who is usually the most ridiculed of all the characters in the history of comedy. Ridicule towards the amorous senex belongs to the standards of sixteenth-century comedy as it did to Greek and

this way, the deliveryman assumes a lower position on the social ladder of the comedy.

In addition to the everyday realities of deliverymen, the scene provides the reader or spectator with information about the changing cityscape of Florence. In fact, the interlocutors make enough references to town spaces that we may map out the area in which spectators should envision this scene. If we follow this spatial aspect of the encounter, we hear from Gherardo that he lives in the newly constructed homes in Sant'Ambrogio. We notice that the deliveryman is headed toward Via Pentolini, and from Gherardo's remark that the *zana* can double his service in one trip, their conversation must be somewhere that allows him to frequent both places.[10] Perhaps surprisingly, previous use of Gelli's comedies as historical and objective documents is noted in Armand De Gaetano's study: "customs and institutions of his environment [are represented] by showing both sides of the coin . . . [this] is confirmed by the fact that his observations have been used as documents for sociological studies on the Italian family in the sixteenth century, for example, in the works of Nino Tamassia" (1976: 329). Regardless of how extensively or faithfully we would like to analyze the intersection of factual urban development and its representation on stage

Roman comedy. This fact can be partially explained by the morally charged nature of ideas about the family and society in conventional comedy. An elderly man who does not know his personal limits and demonstrates himself unwise by attempting to court, or bed, a much younger woman is often found belittled by the end of the plot. That the senex has the upper hand in *Lo errore* over a fellow class member is indicative of the deliveryman's social class.

[10] Today Via Pentolini is the section of Via de' Macci between Piazza Sant'Ambrogio and Via Ghibellina. It had taken the name Pentolini because of an osteria famous for a door to which small pots (pentolini) had been attached. It's indicated that these small pots were used by the oste to sell mustard. The section of the street between Via dell'Agnolo and Piazza Sant'Ambrogio remained Via Pentolini at least through 1731 when a Florentine map drawn by Ferdinando Ruggieri was published while the section between Via dell'Agnolo and Via San Giuseppe had taken on the name Via de' Macci (La grande guida delle strade di Firenze 2003: 355). Additionally, there's overlap of the surname Macci in that area of the city with Gelli's plays. The foolish senex from *La sporta* is Ghirigoro de' Macci. Florentine records indicate that the Macci family fell from grace, so to speak, and had their houses and towers confiscated by the Republic, at which time they moved to the area of Via Pentolini and Via Malborghetto (2003: 355). The latter was named purposefully for the presence of the miserable homes of the poorest population of the city. Given that Ghirigoro is not wealthy (his fear of losing his small fortune is extreme) and that he is ridiculed, it wouldn't be unlikely in my opinion that the spectators of the comedy, likely only academy members, had this area of the city in mind. As a bare minimum I believe that the relationships between Florentine cultural history and Gelli's comedies are endless and prove his zealous attention to theatrum mundi.

there is little doubt that the intimate municipal feeling of Gelli's comedy is a conscious choice made by the author.[11] The *zanaiuolo* is one of the realistic implications of Gelli and his fellow playwrights' spirit of civic comedy. The deliveryman is the catalyst for dynamism and spontaneity in their representation of the city and their comic theatre.

Giovan Maria Cecchi's *L'ammalata*

Giovan Maria Cecchi is certainly the most prolific of mid-sixteenth century Florentine playwrights and the most celebrated dramatist of the Florentine Academy. In public life, he exercised the profession of notary, was involved in the wool trade, and occupied the important public offices of proconsul and Chancellor of the Maestri di Contratto. As an author, Cecchi experimented in many genres: prose, treatise, poetry, and theatre. With over fifty theatrical works, including comedy, intermezzi, sacred drama and farce, Cecchi's dramatic production was tireless. The playwright's twenty-one comedies – some lost today – consistently refashion and infuse tried-and-true classical and Renaissance models with sparks of innovation; such is the case of his masterpiece, *L'Assiuolo.* Although they contain mirror images of Florentine life, several of Cecchi's comedies have remained unpublished and unedited for centuries. Such is the case of *L'ammalata* of which there is no record of performance or printing before 1855. Like the other members of the Florentine Academy, Cecchi included present-day circumstances in the plots and settings of his comedies, allowing them to be analyzed for the social realities of the time. Franco Fido has commented on Cecchi's innovation in his famous *L'Assiuolo* by drawing attention to his particular contribution via language, which signals departure from his models. Whereas others – Machiavelli and il Lasca – have defended their stylized cast yet modern comical language in prologue for the purpose of *diletto* or talent, Fido claims that "for the bourgeois and religious Cecchi, author of many dramas for nuns and high-school teenagers, the exceptionally colorful language of *L'Assiuolo* needs a specific justification, and this is found in a closer, realistic approach to everyday life, presented as a consequence of, and a compensation for, giving up the traditional devices and stylizations" (89).

L'ammalata is thus another example of Florentine comedy that com-

[11] Chiara Cassani comments on the spontaneity of street encounters and their effect on the genre in this way: "Il fatto che i personaggi si incontrino continuamente per la via, vicino alle loro abitazioni, accresce la freschezza e la spontaneità della messa in scena. . . . Colpisce anche la precisione delle determinazioni ambientali che richiamano i luoghi a lui più familiari, le chiese e le strade di Firenze . . ." (2006: 254).

municates urban reality through the encounter of a zanaiuolo. In 4.4, a deliveryman appears onstage carrying a letter. The task is similar to that of a unnamed zanaiuolo of Francesco D'Ambra's *I Bernardi*, but Cecchi's deliveryman does not fail to mention his talent in the kitchen. The zanaiuolo also provides his name – Gian Pitto – and where one can easily find him should his services be needed in the future. The one scene interaction between Gian Pitto and Alesso, a nobleman, remains civil, but we will notice immediately Gian Pitto's southern vernacular. We also notice that Gian Pitto orients himself with relative ease in the conversation, and that this representation is reminscient of Gelli's first *zanaiuolo*, Polo. No negative stereotypes associated with the *zanaiuolo* of *Lo Errore* are mentioned, notwithstanding how we may interpret his dialect, and the interaction is pleasant enough for a nobleman-servile figure encounter:

Zanaiuolo Buon iorno a Vostra Sinnoria. Sta qui
Un servidor che s'annomannna il Volpe?
Alesso Sì, sta. Che cosa volevi da lui?
Zanaiuolo Darli quista. Ello in casa, che tu sacci?
Alesso Non c'è, no.
Zanaiuolo I' torneraggio.
Alesso Mostra qua:
Da chi vien?
Zanaiuolo Non lo saccio, messer, ma
La deggio dar in mano a isso.
Alesso Dà
Qua, ché è mio famiglio; che saranno
Imbasciate di donne.
Alesso Sempre quanno
Lo zana porta lettere, ti pienzi
Che sieno polli?
Alesso Oh! che gli è il vostro solito.
Zanaiuolo Per guardagnare io porterei imbasciate
Allo diabol.
Alesso Dà qua, ch'io ti faro
Servigio.
Zanaiuolo Tu me togli un'altra gita.
Ma famme, ve', di grazia buon servizio.
Alesso Sì, sì.
Zanaiuolo Me ne risposo, vedi, sopra
De te. Vuo' tu accomandarme niente?
Alesso Vatti con Dio.
Zanaiuolo O messer, se tu avessi
A far convito, oh! i' son valente coco,
Potta de santa mamma mia! io saccio

Far buon arrosti, pasticci…
ALESSO Sta bene;
Io t'arò a mente.
ZANAIUOLO Se tu hai bisogno,
Vien pur là in Mercato, e si domanna
Gian Pitto.
ALESSO Or via.
ZANAIUOLO Così me chiamo. Addio:
Mi raccomanno.
(4.4)

[ZANAIUOLO Good day your Lordship. Is he here / a servant that is named the Fox? / ALESSO Yes, he's here. What did you want from him? / ZANAIUOLO To give him this. Is he in the house that you know? / ALESSO He's not here, no. ZANAIUOLO I'll come back. ALESSO Show it here. / Who's it coming from? ZANAIUOLO I don't know, sir, but / I have to give it in hand to him. ALESSO Give / It here, because he's my servant, and it's probably / Messages from women. ZANAIUOLO Always when / A zana brings letters, you think /That they are chickens? ALESSO Oh! Here we are again, that's your usual. / ZANAIUOLO To earn some money, I would bring messages // To the devil. ALESSO Give it here, that I will do you / This service. ZANAIUOLO You're taking away another trip from me. / But you can do me this service, with thanks. / ALESSO Yes, yes. ZANAIUOLO I have answered, you see, above / From you. Do you not want to accommodate me with anything? / ALESSO Go with God. ZANAIUOLO O sir, if you should need / To have a banquet, oh! I am a valiant cook, / I swear on my mother's cunt ! I can / Make good roasted meats, pies and hashes… ALESSO That's well. / I'll keep you in mind. ZANAIUOLO If you need, / Come even there, to the Market, and ask for / Gian Pitto. ALESSO Now go. ZANAIUOLO That's my name. Goodbye; / Remember me.]

The *zanaiuolo*'s utterances in this scene confirm his usual aptitude and employment in the kitchen, and he even suggests where he can be found, at the market.[12] The market in question in *L'ammalata* is most likely the *mer-*

[12] While Gaetano Milanesi suggests an idiomatic meaning for the deliveryman's question "ti pienzi / che siano polli?" which would characterize the *zanaiuolo* negatively, I argue that this line may not be so easy to interpret. Milanesi states that this question can be intended as 'fare il ruffiano' (to be a ruffian). We could imagine a scenario in which the deliveryman would be a ruffian and the *Grande Dizionario dell'Italiano* mentions that the *zanaiolo* can be identified as such in "Proprietà di mercato vecchio" by Antonio Pucci. By Pucci, he is mentioned alongside other undesirables: "E meretrici vi sono e ruffian / battifancelli, zanaiuoli e gaioffi / e i tignosi e scabbiosi cattani". However, lo *zanaiuolo* is commonly encountered carrying food items, particularly those that he intends to cook in the home. Therefore, scenes with deliverymen from multiple other comedies indicate that a literal association of *zanaiuoli* with chicken

cato vecchio, occupied today by the Piazza della Repubblica at the heart of Florence's historic center. In Gelli's *La sporta* Polo also mentions the *mercato* as the space in which he would open his *bottega da treccone* and where Ghirigoro would attempt to negotiate with food vendors and be laughed away. Polo's narration of Ghirigoro's laughable encounters with food vendors and his own daydream of opening a bottega there depict a lively space of exchange, while Gian Pitto's pitch for his services leads a reader to believe that he, alongside other *zanaiuoli*, congregate at the *mercato vecchio* awaiting short-term labor, delivering goods and post or preparing meals in different homes. As is the case with Gelli's *Lo errore* in which the deliveryman and his interlocutor depict Florence through mention of Sant'Ambrogio and Via dei Pentolini, Cecchi's *L'ammalata* pinpoints the old market as a space of encounter and contractual day labor in mid sixteenth-century Florence.

The Place of Zanaiuoli in Comedy and the Urban Environment

The appearance of the *zanaiuolo* suggests the playwrights' desire to mirror contemporary society and to widen the coterie of cast members with whom the audience could identify its surroundings. A realistic portrayal of the community – and language – in an appeal to audiences is not rare. We know well from prologues that Gelli and Cecchi placed great emphasis on the Ciceronian creed, and the idea of special resonance or willful playfulness with the social and political tensions of the period is often a basic tenet of scholarship on Italian Renaissance comedy. Yet beyond a simple creed, the choice of food purveyors functions as an observation of dialogue across social classes and advances ordinary motifs as dignified for academy stages.

Gelli and his works serve as both example and model of the faithful representation of Renaissance Florence and of the popularizing ideology of the Florentine Academy. In Paul Oskar Kristeller's preface to De Gaetano's *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy: The Rebellion against Latin*, Kristeller agrees with his pupil's conclusion that Gelli and the Florentine Academy's success aided in the "popularization of public instruction for a wider public of curious and educated laymen" (1976: vii-viii). Gelli's ideas to propagate education through use of the Tuscan vernacular and the academy's interest in society and education are the focus of De Gaetano's study. Sanesi, too, centers in on the fate and dignity of the *volgare* as well as the role of the intellectual in his appraisal of Gelli's work. In an edition of Gelli's theatre, the scholar attests:

(*polli*) also exists.

> [Gelli] volle, cioè, dimostrare con la maggior parte dei suoi scritti ai pertinaci oppositori della nostra lingua che l'italiano è adattatissimo alla trattazione di tute le discipline, storiche, filologiche, filosofiche, scientifiche, e che in italiano, né più né meno che in latino, si possono esprimere alti e profondi e fin anche astrusi concetti: sostenendo, al tempo stesso (e attuando in forma concreta questa sua convinzione) che gli uomini sapienti non devono chiudersi orgogliosamente nella ròcca solitaria della loro dottrina ma devono, anzi, liberalmente comunicarla a quel maggior numero di persone che sia loro possibile. (1968: 12-13)

In the footsteps of Renaissance comedy fathers like Machiavelli, the dimensions of Gelli and Cecchi's comedies are municipally-focused with fresh and communicative language.[13] Gelli's description of language in his Ragionamento sopra le difficultà del mettere in regole la nostra lingua speaks to his belief in the continual mutability of all things in this world, including la lingua: "ella è viva, e va all'insù." Such attention to the detailed present of language parallels the dedication to the ever-changing faces of social composition and furthers the popularizing spirit of the dramas in question.

In addition, Cassiani has recently looked at Gelli's dialogic corpus and has found within it what she calls a cultural project of dialogue. She suggests that Gelli's works point to a philosophy of "things" in an all-inclusive community:

> Gelli intende proporre una filosofia di "cose" all'interno di una comunità dove "alto" e "basso", in senso sociale e culturale, non siano separati e possono dialogare. . . . anche le commedie si rilevano parte integrante dell'unitario progetto politico e culturale di Gelli, incentrato sulla costruzione di un'etica civile nella quale la dimensione privata e quella pubblica si fondono armonicamente. (2006: 250-1)

In this company, I contend that we can make sense of Gelli's and the Florentine Academy's comedies as a part of the cultural project through the staging of food purveyors. The interaction of *zanaiuoli* in more or less spontaneous street/piazza scenes brings about the physical and verbal dialogues of "high" and "low" members of society. It is in this way that deliverymen cause multiple strata of society to communicate and coexist, and they demonstrate the peculiarities of a specific society's relationships among urban citizens, their foods and meals. The comedies coming out of the Florentine Academy are embedded so deeply and precisely in one city's cultural make-up that they furnish local professionals seemingly unidentifi-

[13] It seems Gelli had opportunity to visit the meetings at the Orti Oricellari where he would have listened to the debates on the volgare. As such he remained faithful to the suggestion of Machiavelli for the cultural rebirth of Florence.

able on other city-state stages.

As these professions emerge onstage, the local feel of the vernacular also informs the characterization of the *zanaiuolo* as an outsider or a foreigner. De Gaetano also attends to Gelli's particular attention to *idioma*: "[He showed] a thorough mastery of the Florentine tongue and a keen sensitivity for its usage . . . His perception of linguistic changes and distinction was keen in differences of speech and intercommunal variation" (1976: 47).[14] Franco Fido suggests further that "if, as we have seen, the Renaissance playwright does not feel responsible for the structure or "order" of comedy, established once for all by the Latins and handed down to him through Ariosto or Bibbiena, he does know that in language lies his peculiar contribution to theater . . ." (89). In the case of Gelli and the Florentine Academy, the attentiveness to language and the presence of food purveyors together further a playwrights' innovation.

One could argue that the Academy employed two parallel strategies: one that focuses on accessible and contemporary language to identify society with the stage, and the other that uses the particulars of the stage, cast, and setting to reinforce the capacity of that accessible language. With Gelli at its charge, the Florentine Academy's cultural production opened the doors between what takes place in comedy and in civic life, how the public comprehends through language and identifies its community. What *zanaiuoli* do onstage and in street encounters, this type of Florentine comedy attempts to do for public instruction: blurring boundaries of social interaction. These two tendencies, one in drama, one in communal intellectual life, confirm the accessibility of popular (culinary) culture and the purposeful inclusion of middle class habits and authentic lower class individual, at times in addition to, at times in place of, stereotypical, classically modeled characters such as servants and *facchini*.

These conclusions bring the playwrights and their works into a domain that can be understood through the concept of cultural mobility. Stephen Greenblatt and his colleagues argue in their *Manifesto* that not only in the twenty-first century may we associate cultural change with radical mobility; cultural mobility allows us to comprehend patterns of meaning created by human societies in virtually all periods (2010 *Manifesto*). If new figures in comedy are indicative of the ever-changing constitution of society, our analysis can be pushed past holistic, rooted and undamaged concepts of elite Renaissance culture. A unitary vision of Renaissance culture remains prevalent today: it is tempting to reassert the persistence of classical mod-

[14] Pirandello certainly feels similarly. He comments in his essay *Sull'umorisimo* that if Gelli would have been born English and everyone would have read his works, the Italian sense of humor would be a household name.

els and imitative practices because they are so easily recognized in the form and ethos of early Renaissance masterpieces. Indeed, Gelli and Cecchi rely heavily on the works of their predecessors. Moreover, evidence available to use concerning court theatre and majestic events that displays ideals of Neoplatonism, of comedy and of spectacle is far more conspicuous. Yet, deliverymen allow us to notice a less obvious set of relationships proving that Florentine culture is also constantly in flux. Observations of contemporary realities are confirmed not only by adopting the simple phrase "questo non è Atene" or "moderna non antica, volgare non latina" in prologue, but also through the composition of the cast. I would argue that this element of comedy proves most convincingly that societies and their cultures are mobile. Changing constitutions in the cast is an excellent example of radical cultural mobility because it counters a naïve notion that inland Renaissance communities like Florence were coherent *nationally or ethnically.*[15]

In conclusion, the role of a *zanaiuolo* is also characterized by his ability to move in "contact zones" where cultural goods are exchanged. Greenblatt puts forth that "certain places are characteristically set apart from inter-cultural contact; others are deliberately made open, with the rules suspended that inhibit exchange elsewhere. A specialized group of 'mobilizers' – agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries – often emerges to facilitate contact" (2010 *Manifesto*). For instance, while the court and the home are traditionally set apart from inter-cultural contact, a piazza, convergence of streets, is a deliberately open area, especially on stage in theatre, that allows for exchange. As it concerns a *zanaiuolo*, this exchange establishes the deliveryman as the intermediary of urban citizens and their foods, creating contact between the market, the street, and the home. Writing at the end of the sixteenth century, Tommaso Garzoni grasped the ways that societies and professions were changing. His *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* forwards the notion of a more horizontal society in the metaphor of a piazza. It is in these piazze or convergence of streets that we find the food purveyors of mid-century drama who indicate mobility in an otherwise static cast in Florentine communities.

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[15] We widely recognize, and rightfully so, that coastal cities, such as Venice, and Rome, as the center of the Catholic Church, were ethnically diverse, while Tuscany is often quietly assumed to be more uniform in its cultural make-up.

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Performative Uncertainty and Antifragile Theatre[1]

Abstract

In my paper I confront two different ways of understanding and making use of uncertainty in theatre. The first one, which I will call "dramaturgical uncertainty", dominates in the Western tradition of story-focused theatre practice and relates to Aristotelian Poetics and his notion of peripeteia as a sudden "change in fortune". The second one, which I want to call "performative uncertainty", can be applied – generally speaking – to theatrical events that respond to and take advantage of spontaneous and unpredictable factors. In the latter case I will understand uncertainty on the basis of Nassim Nicholas Taleb'stheory of antifragility (2012) which convincingly criticizes the idea of "overplanning" of complex systems and offers an alternative model of organizing performance that can also be applied in the context of theatre (and its organization). My theoretical observations will be grounded in the analysis of Revolution Now! by Gob Squad (2010), a very peculiar example of postdramatic theatre in which participation is at the same time used to introduce indeterminacy into the performance and captured within a narrative structure to reach unexpected conclusions.

Keywords: antifragility; uncertainty; dramaturgy; catastrophe; theatre theory

Coherence is fragile, but persuasive. Just in a matter of seconds a perfectly prepared performance can easily fall to pieces – a minor accident is all it takes: allergy-prone Romeo sneezes under Juliet's balcony, Otello forgets his lines, clumsy Hamlet slips comically and pathos turns into slapstick. Yet still, coherence – as an unspoken rule of artistic professionalism – imposes itself on theatre practitioners and is rarely contested within the confined walls of big institutions, both commercial and state-founded. For centuries it was the text that served as the primary medium for artistic coherence. Not only were texts tools for storing and reproducing performances – quite

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primitive, at least in comparison with cameras and more sophisticated devices for mapping and digitizing physical spaces – but also they allowed to shape and contain the unpredictable multiplicity of theatre agents: actors, viewers, and objects (with their specific affordances). All these entities – possessing different traits and driven by different aspirations – were moulded into a relatively predictable dynamic system constricted by the singular vision of the dramatist and – of course – rigid theatrical space split (by the fourth wall) into stage and audience. With the emergence of bourgeois theatre this division – into active actors and passive viewers – was deepened even further, as the erratic crowds around Europe were disciplined in a very simple way: just like naughty kids unwilling to fall asleep – by simply turning off the lights. Commercialization, which pressured entrepreneurs to produce repeatable performances, and aesthetization of performances, which resulted in the emergence of the theatre artist (and policeman), namely the director, also contributed to the acceleration of theatre's evolution towards aesthetic coherence. With the director at the head of the group the role of drama gradually diminished.

Naturally, this is a very simple story which applies only to big, professional theatres which offered artistic service to the middle and upper classes. Most of the popular forms – from Elizabethan stage and *commedia dell'arte* to improve and Boal's community theatre – do not fit into the picture. The fetish of coherence was also viciously attacked by neo-avant-garde groups, like The Living Theatre in the 1960s, which contested conservative morality and taste of smug bourgeoisie. However, despite the fact that these popular forms and avant-garde aesthetics were later quoted and adapted by directors in institutional theatres – for example, by Klaus Michael Grüber in his famous staging of Euripides' *The Bacchae* (1974) or by Claus Peymann in Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience* (1966) – the primacy of coherence was never seriously contested in the mainstream. On the face of it, "postdramatic theatre" (Lehmann 2006) or "open drama" (Klotz 1960) may seem precisely anti-coherent. Non-realist drama in the 20th century presented reality from multiple perspectives evoking fragmented and even self-contradictory worlds, while postdramatic directors in the 1980s and 1990s carried the avant-garde impulse to destroy coherence and aimed at demolishing the continuum of time in classical drama (Lehmann 2006: 62). But at the same time one can argue that on the level of performance organization nothing really changed that drastically. In most cases described by Lehmann, strictness and unity of drama was simply substituted by artistic visions (and individual aesthetics of the great auteurs). The self-centred theatre of Tadeusz Kantor – who became so influential for many leading artists after 1989 – can serve as the best example of deconstruction leading to the creation of coherent and closed theatre realities.

This is why I find it so compelling to take a closer look and reflect on the theatre practice of a small, international group Gob Squad which predominantly works for major theatre institutions – mostly Volksbühne in Berlin – and at the same time consciously challenges the dictate of coherence. They began in the mid-1990s by making happenings and performances (first one, *House*, in 1994), mostly in public and commercial spaces. With time they began collaborating with festivals and theatres trying to reconcile their guerrilla spirit with the conservative climate of permanent institutions. In Michel Serres' sense of this term (1982) they can be labelled as 'productive parasites' who feast on the remains of disintegrating institutions, use their infrastructures, while maintaining artistic freedom that comes with institutional autonomy. What I find most fascinating in their work is their uncommon ability to interweave rigid dramaturgies – which organize performances and ensure their meaning – with structural openness that allows them to respond to environmental unpredictability. Gob Squad's exceptionality is grounded in their ability to return to equilibrium after provoked crises which unravel in unpredictable directions, or in other words, the ability of turning chaos into order. In this text I will investigate: 1) how they are able to make use of this performative (creative) uncertainty without sacrificing structure and meaning, and 2) in what ways these 'anti-fragile' performances differ from those which are 'fragilely coherent'.[2] However – given my interest in epistemologies of performance – I want to begin by addressing a more general problem concerning the importance of uncertainty in classical dramaturgy.

It is also worth noting that recently, as Western societies were getting accustomed to the fact that uncertainty became a permanent trait of the neoliberal landscape (a paradox to be spotted here), the topic of uncertainty has gained prominence among scholars who deal with social and cultural issues (cf. Zinn 2008). This recognition had much in common with recognizing the permanent effects of globalization on economy and culture. At least since the late 1970s and the advent of neoliberal economy, uncertainty is being used as a 'creative factor': a social resource exploited for boost-

[2] This is a term often used by William Kentridge to address the potential of disintegration inherent to every work of art which, in turn, is always an attempt at controlling chaos. So Kentridge: "In so far as there is a central logic behind the whole project, it is the argument of the fragility of coherence, in which the coherence and disintegration of images refers also to other fragilities and breaks. In this regard all the sections of the project are about anti-entropy, a gathering out of chaos to order, rather than a reversion from order to a state of dispersal. With each section the work is to make the disintegration. The completed image is the simplest task. Its apparent explosion is where the concentration is – as if the opera is the easy part, the tuning up, and turning the real work." (2008: 23-5).

ing economies, a source of everyday excitement drawn from 'politainment' (the politico-media complex), and a handy tool to divide and govern societies that live in constant fear (of migration, unemployment, loss of identity, etc.). As Naomi Klein famously showed (2007), it is the defining characteristic of neoliberal capitalism to operate by inciting catastrophes that release energies of "creative destruction" (Schumpeter 1975). This paradigm shift has also been acknowledged and described in depth by such sociologists as Ulrich Beck (1992), Anthony Giddens (1990), and Zygmunt Bauman (2006).

However, the surging interest in 'cultural uncertainty' – exemplified for instance by the last edition of the Foreign Affairs festival in Berlin (2016) – has to be considered something new. During this festival artists, sociologists, and culture experts examined the emerging cultures of uncertainty while assuming that "the question of how to deal with the uncertainty of social and political realities is becoming increasingly urgent".[3] The aesthetic aspects of indeterminacy, openness, and uncertainty are also becoming important among theatre scholars who study participatory strategies in performance (White 2013). The best example of this interest is a recently published book *Risk, Participation, and Performance Practice* in which the authors examine how "openness, uncertainty, and varying degrees of exposure contribute to an aesthetic paradigm where risk is deployed as an intentional tactic, a strategy of engagement, or a critical tool for the shared making of meaning" (O'Grady 2017: xi). By investigating aesthetical, existential, and ethical aspects of risk in participatory performances they reflect on the notion of 'critical vulnerability' and unveil its positive and negative dimensions. Nonetheless, by favouring notions of risk and participation in their methodology they do not pay much attention to epistemological and communicational aspects of uncertainty on which I would like to elaborate. That is why I want to begin by painting a very brief picture of the role uncertainty plays in classical dramaturgy.

Uncertainty for Catharsis. The Case of *Oedipus Rex*

Out of all tragedies Aristotle admired Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* the most. In *Poetics* he presented it as a standard for every writer to follow, because – as Stephen White aptly puts it – it masterfully "dramatizes a movement from *hamartia* to recognition that reveals the depths of the protagonists' concern for the people harmed or threatened by their actions" (White 1992: 237). For Aristotle, transition from mistake to recognition – or from crisis

[3] https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/aktuell/festivals/berlinerfestspiele/archiv_bfs/archiv_programme_bfs/foreign_affairs/archiv_fa16/fa16_programm/fa16_veranstaltungsdetail_171541.php.

to tragic condition – marked a crucial moment in every tragedy and was responsible for its true moral effect: *anagnorisis* was the tipping and turning point of the tragic conduct which in true drama was able to trigger the feelings of fright and pity in the viewer. Therefore, it can be said that the startling effect of *katharsis* was grounded in a linear (and rapid) transition from state A (error) to state B (recognition). Despite the fact that a model tragedy should represent action and not character, Aristotle understood tragic action as a singular and causally related chain of events that culminated in a singular point of focus on the protagonist. The tragic effect inherently relied on linearity of the story and its experience. According to the Greek philosopher, in the best tragedies *anagnorisis* (recognition) and *peripeteia* (reversal of fate) should coincide in one moment. And that was the case in *Oedipus Rex*.

But *Oedipus* does not begin as a story about an individual – the mythic king – but about a city. The tragedy opens up with a social event that transcends the possibility of a linear narrative and understanding: a catastrophe. The first words uttered by the reigning king tell us the story of the people of Thebes who were struck by a lamentable disaster: an outbreak of a mysterious plague. Oedipus bemoans that: "Why is the city thick with incense smoke, / and chants of Paean mixed with cries of pain?" (Soph. *OT* 4-5; trans. Taplin 2015). But as the story progresses, we realize that the town and the suffering of the people is only a background decoration for the more intimate drama that takes place inside the castle chambers. The terrible crisis is soon resolved and – as we all know – two prophets play a pivotal role in this resolution: a prophetess in the Apollo temple and a blind soothsayer, Tiresias. They provide the protagonist Oedipus with necessary cues that allow him to solve the mystery of the epidemic, that is, to blame himself (the tyrant) for the suffering of his people. What begins as a story of the socius ends as a personal drama and leads towards the conclusion: the suffering was never social, the story was always only about one figure.

The story of Oedipus became so transparent over time that it commonly epitomizes Greek tragedy as such, partly thanks to Aristotle's praises and his influence on the culture of the European Renaissance. However – if we want to look deeper into the problem of uncertainty in theatre and drama – we should look with a bit of suspicion into Sophocles' method of framing catastrophe as a singular story. And – more importantly – we should ask: what were the epistemological consequences of presenting the solution to this mystery in terms of individual deeds? Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari noted that nothing concerning the famous Oedipus complex should be treated as self-apparent and thus impervious to critique: "It is often thought that Oedipus is an easy subject to deal with, something perfectly obvious, a 'given' that is there from the very beginning. But that is not so at all"

(1983: 3). I would like to apply the same suspicion to Sophocles' tragedy which functions as a cornerstone for the European tradition of tragic dramaturgy.

To answer those questions, we should take into account that Sophocles told us this story about a fictional epidemic in Thebes by referring undoubtedly to the actual, historical epidemic that had struck Athens only a few years before the Theban plays were written (Dixon 1996; Kousoulis et al. 2012; McNeill 1976). This historical background is rarely taken into consideration in canonical interpretations of Greek tragedy. Harold Bloom (2007) only mentions it in passing, whilst Humphrey D.F. Kitto (2011) does not even do so. Yet only from such a historical point of view can we understand that *Oedipus Rex* had an important social, political, and epistemological meaning for the citizens of Athens in that it harnessed uncertainty in the real world and re-channelled it for narrative purposes. The fright and the pity were in fact quite real as the memories of the plague were still fresh among the Athenians. From this perspective we can safely surmise that the Theban plays offered a narrative 'framing' of the real-world experience – they 'solved' the traumatic and puzzling event, and thus reduced cognitive uncertainty induced by the epidemic. It is not to suggest that any citizen of Athens took the play literally and blamed Oedipus for their own suffering, but I want to argue that Sophocles provided general tools for understanding catastrophic events (and, for instance, blaming a fellow citizen). In other words, *Oedipus Rex* did not give specific answers, but suggested a way of coherently asking the question. It is pointless to speculate what the reasons for this were: whether Sophocles had political interests, or was it an involuntary, purely aesthetic decision? From my perspective it is important to indicate the relation between catastrophe – understood primarily as a cognitive challenge – and his method of writing, which later influenced Aristotle to standardize poetics of writing tragedies, for which he took Oedipus as the core example.

As I said, we can imagine that the real plague posed a challenge for the minds of the Athenians in 430 BCE: it was something uncanny and out of order. There were no definitive tools to understand it, no scientists to take samples, check them in a laboratory, and produce a scientific verdict. The disaster – as any other in these times – had to remain ambiguous and unintelligible, so naturally it gave rise to uncertainty among the citizens who could speculate on the potential futures, causes, meanings behind their suffering. It was in such a political and social climate that Sophocles wrote his tragedy and decided to relate it to the events of the recent past. He staged the Theban myth, which allowed him to situate the catastrophe in a moral framework. The epidemic in Thebes was presented as a result of 'disturbed' moral equilibrium (*dike*) in the world after Oedipus had committed an evil

deed, unknowingly killing his father. The unresolved evil haunted the community of Oedipus and demanded redress. This is how a natural disaster – a complex matter in Sophocles' story – became a moral issue.

It is debatable whether the moral order in Thebes was restored by the acts of divine justice working through the prophecies or whether Oedipus was bound by nature itself which simply returned to the state of order after crisis. Some critics even argued that the protagonist was free in his choices and it is possible to support such claims. Even so, it is beyond any debate that the story of Oedipus develops linearily and that Sophocles compressed a (potentially) complex and multidimensional phenomenon into a causal chain of micro-events. In other words, he translated social uncertainty into dramaturgical uncertainty which in turn might have become a model for aesthetic engagement and a framework for understanding the real world.

To sum up these remarks, the social and cultural importance of *Oedipus Rex* lies precisely in Sophocles' telling a story of a disaster. Unlike Thucydides in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Sophocles did not tackle uncertainty and complexity together. He neither introduced many perspectives nor aimed to find peace with uncertainty. On the contrary, he tried to resolve cognitive uncertainty and to replace it with a frightening conclusion. In the play *katastrophe* becomes *peripeteia* followed by *katharsis*. The audience can understand what happened to Oedipus and this understanding is granted them if they follow a simple chain of causally ordered cues. Deed A leads to deed B – this is the basic formula of classical dramaturgy, which is a way not only to arrange events in a tragedy, but also to support a deterministic and linear view of the world. The coincidence of the real plague in Athens and its simulation in *Oedipus Rex* proves this – the tragedy appears as 'media coverage' to universalize and frame the experience which as such has no 'meaning'. The multifaceted, complex, social uncertainty sparked by the plague and encompassing many doubts and many potential stories is expressed in the form of simple questions: why did it happen and who is to blame? And the answer is given by Sophocles in personal and singular terms. The tale of the people of Thebes presents only one character who becomes a (self-sacrificing) scapegoat.

Hence, in tragedy uncertainty is associated with lack of (human) knowledge about hidden determinations. The audience and the protagonist share the same fate while remaining in the state of ignorance resolved at the end of the play. The (tragic) truth is elegantly simple, only initially unknown to the viewers (and the characters). I want to underline that this decision – to present the world as causal and simple – should be seen in the light of its epistemological consequence, namely the linearization of uncertainty on the cognitive level. And this was precisely the main downside of preserving the unity of the story which "ought to be of one action and it ought

to be a whole" (Arist. *Po.* 1450b24-5; trans. Sachs 2006). Greek authors and many of their later imitators followed the path of Sophocles and conserved the worldview according to which uncertainty was synonymous with ignorance, and accidental elements should be excluded from the story in the name of plausibility and intellectual coherence.

However, it is important to stress again that the tragic dramaturgy does not exclude uncertainty altogether, but rather channels it as a source of suspense. Ignorance of the viewers is exactly what draws them into fictional worlds, action, and into a character's fate, which remains interesting precisely because of the veil of uncertainty. Classical dramaturgy thus relies on a paradox: uncertainty is at the same time welcome as the source of emotional engagement and treated as a mystery to be unveiled. This is a very pessimistic view of uncertainty as it is thought to lie in the (imperfect) eye of the beholder and not in the complexity of the world. In such a model no real adventure is possible, everything is already predetermined: by the character's fate and by the playwright's script. Nothing new and exciting can happen on stage and every event can be foreseen (if one has the necessary information). Both soothsayers and dramatists look for fate in randomness.

Brecht's Critique of Linear Dramaturgy

This is probably why Bertolt Brecht despised 'Aristotelian' theatre so much. It is fruitful to turn here to Brecht's writings on theatre, as he was deeply interested in how different theatre forms determined different perceptions of reality. His disregard for the Aristotelian dramaturgy was so strong that he gave its name to everything he found pitiful in European theatre tradition; that is, to all idealist, psychologizing, and deterministic tendencies that dominated in European theatre since its birth in ancient Greece. For Brecht, all these problems stemmed from the "centralization of plot and an organic interdependence of the separate parts" (2000: 22) in tragedy. We can speculate that Brecht's critical view of tragedy's oneness and cohesion was also partially caused by his negative experiences with bourgeois theatre which celebrated the tradition of deterministic linearity. In melodramas the oversimplified and 'demoralized' catharsis became an aesthetic effect sought after by dramatists and viewers – a mere pleasant sensation used to incite some excitement into the dull life of an average townsman. Brecht was right that the focus on the individual and her transformation was already present in Greek texts, but in tragedy it was at least given a transcendent meaning. Sophocles transcendentalized the suffering of Oedipus who – in turn – transcendentalized the suffering of the Theban com-

munity, lifting it to the mythical plane of relations between humans and gods. This plane of transcendence disappeared from 19th-century European theatre which focused on the human being, stripped to her/his bare (but universal to all mankind) emotions. Brecht ridiculed this tradition by enlisting typical reactions of the bourgeois theatre crowd: "Yes, I have felt that too.—That's how I am.—That is only natural.—That will always be so.—This person's suffering shocks me because he has no way out.—This is great art: everything in it is self-evident.—I weep with the weeping, I laugh with the laughing" (2000: 23). Brecht exposed this emotional blackmail, but his hostility towards Aristotelian dramaturgy had a serious epistemological justification – the naturalization of fate and determinism distorted the image of social reality and stood in the way of proletarian revolution.

Without a doubt Brecht's reluctance towards dramaturgical focalization on the individual was influenced by his experience of living in the turbulent times of the beginning of the 20th century. For Brecht World War I and industrial capitalism shattered the illusion of 'I', a sensible individual who makes rational choices. By showing how easily we can mechanize human existence and how irrelevant human 'inner life' is in the face of external factors, war and mass factories destroyed the credibility of culture based on individual psychology. Taking this into account, the dramatist should make room on stage for "oil, inflation, war, social struggles, the family, religion, wheat, the meat-packing industry" (2000: 23). Brecht argued that we needed new drama and new theatre that could express world as a scene of conflicts and tensions between social groups, ideas, energies, and material interests. His ideas diverged drastically from classical dramaturgy: in Brechtian theatre the world should present itself as a complex habitat of different forces and not as a linear tale.

However, maybe even more importantly, Brecht's disdain for Aristotelian theatre stemmed from the fact that in the 19th century deterministic dramaturgy was framed into bourgeois aesthetics of illusionism which excluded theatre audiences from the field of visibility and focalized all attention on the *dramatis personae*. In one of Brecht's earliest texts, *Emphasis on Sport*, published just before the staging of *Baal*, his first play, in 1926, we can find a remark which reveals his outright contempt for the theatre of illusionistic exclusion: "A theatre which makes no contact with the public is a nonsense" (Willett 1974: 7). Brecht strongly castigated Berlin theatre-goers for passivity and lack of enthusiasm. Then he envisioned a different audience – lively, involved, chanting, and – interestingly – smoking cigars (that is, unhampered). However, he referred to sport arenas precisely because such theatre crowd was no longer conceivable. In 1926 audiences in bourgeois theatres all around Europe were already effectively silenced. This process of disciplining theatre-goers, so that they would not interfere with

events taking place on stage, was an effect of a very long cultural transformation of theatre and coincided with the emergence of the middle class in Western Europe (Fischer-Lichte 2002: 146-54). However, this 'creeping revolution' accelerated rapidly at the end of the 19th century when the very concept of theatrical performance changed dramatically. One of the key factors in this change was strictly technological: it was the invention and popularization of electrical lighting that finally allowed for an efficient division of the theatrical space in half. Joseph Donohue argues that:

> From Elizabethan until late Victorian times, the mutual visibility of audience members as the performance progressed made the experience of theatre-going fundamentally different, socially, from what it would become by the twentieth century, when the auditorium was darkened and the only light emanated from the stage. The sense of anonymity – and passivity – conferred on later play-goers when the lights went down would have been incomprehensible to earlier audiences, always aware of their identity as a community-in-little and likely to register immediate approval or disapproval, not just at the final curtain (2004: 294).

This seemingly minor invention not only boosted the process of disciplining audiences, but also resulted in consolidating the idea that performance is a work of art. Not incidentally, electrical revolution in theatres in the 1880s was soon followed by an aesthetic revolution which Patrice Pavis calls "the origin of mise-en-scène" (2013: 2-10). The profession of director, which shaped the history of 20th-century theatre in Europe, could emerge and flourish only after installing lightbulbs above stage. And it should not come as a surprise, if we agree that the main duty of theatrical directors is to secure performance repeatability (objectified in the form of products of individual artistic vision). Careful organization and control of performance as a predetermined and predictable 'system of meaning' became possible only after establishing order in the auditorium. As Jonathan Crary accurately remarks: "Spectacle is not primarily concerned with a looking at images, but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous" (1999: 74). From this point of view we can assume that most of the technological and artistic innovations at the end of the 19th century expressed a general tendency to exclude uncertainty and indeterminacy from the theatre space. Edward Gordon Craig's and Maurice Maeterlinck's unfulfilled dreams to replace actors with marionettes were probably the most radical emanations of this cultural logic.

Being still in many ways indebted to literary tradition, Brecht could not fully address the problem of materialist uncertainty. And although he strived to exclude classical dramaturgy from his texts, he was aware of the

futility of such endeavours. *Lehrstücke* were expressions of this struggle to include 'the performative' and 'the social' into the text which still aims at delineating the story or characters and holding on to literary values. As I will argue, refashioning uncertainty and 'making use of it' in performative ways not only requires the text to be decentralized or reformulated as a set of instructions for participation, but also calls for finding new ways of productively exploiting unforeseeable factors. And this challenge must be taken up at the same time at the level of devising text, organizing media for performance, and constructing an 'antifragile' communicational structure. To illustrate this point I will turn now to the performance of a post-Brechtian theatre group Gob Squad entitled *Revolution Now!*.

Performative Uncertainty. After Brecht

The first part of the show unfolds according to the standard procedures of postdramatic German theatre: cameras are brought on stage, there is no story whatsoever, actors exchange roles, they mix up different texts and improvise etc. All these bits and pieces are loosely connected by the topic of revolution and the grand question of the show: if a revolution is even possible in a society atomized by capitalism and alienated by technologies of mass communication. As is typical of contemporary German theatre, these general questions are underpinned by a strong sense of reflexivity. For that reason the discussion about the possibility of a new revolution on the streets of Berlin shifts to a more fundamental debate about the sheer conditions of talking about revolution in a safe, enclosed, and isolated theatrical space. After the members of Gob Squad have reached a deadlock in their quarrels, they realize there may be something fundamentally wrong with the whole concept of debating revolution on stage. In doing so they also refer critically to Brecht's idea of revolutionary theatre and – in part at least – the legacy of their host institution: Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg Platz. For Gob Squad's members, every revolution must necessarily involve opening to the unknown, that is, to the unpredictability of the streets and the 'Brownian movements' of masses circulating through them. Almost every modern theatre which closes the doors and dims the lights is thus highly unsuitable for talking about the dynamic world outside. Or to put it more mildly, traditional theatre – which is a product of the bourgeoisie – can reflect on, but not take part in any social change.

Moreover, the audience of the most leftist theatre in leftist Berlin – which, according to the laws of probability, should also be mostly leftist and anti-consumerist – cannot offer a true and open dialogue about the idea of revolution. The reason for that is simple: such audience cannot pro-

vide enough material and energy for experiments in the social laboratory of a truly revolutionary theatre which must incite conflicts and externalize social tensions. Information bubbles can be sometimes rich and complex, but they are never unpredictable. That is why at some point in the middle of the performance Gob Squad members decide to break not only the fourth wall separating them from the audience, but also the external walls of the theatre building which separate them from the less predictable world outside. The group leaves the stage and takes a camera with them. In the meantime its audience is left alone facing a huge screen on which the live movie is projected. There is an irony to this gesture: to reach deeper layers of reality, we need a camera. So begins the search for a protagonist who will lead the future revolution. Actors scatter around Rosa-Luxemburg Platz and enthusiastically interview random passers-by. After finding a person who agrees to take part in the performance, they start asking her/him personal and political questions concerning the topic at hand. At the very end, they introduce the guest on stage as the leader of the future revolution who waives the flag of Volksbühne.

I have seen *Revolution Now!* twice and the events that followed the decision to leave the building unfolded into completely different directions. The first time Gob Squad stumbled upon a young Italian tourist from Naples whose name was Eduardo. He was enjoying a weekend off in Berlin and praised cheap flights and beer in his hostel. He was also really enthusiastic about the whole idea of taking part in a show (a great holiday adventure) and revolutionizing the world in general. Hence, the show was a great success. It ended with a joyful, affirmative ending that gave hope for a better tomorrow. Eduardo's behaviour gave validation and meaning to Gob Squad's decision to leave the building and transcend the sterile space of theatre-laboratory. He – as a random voice of the society – gave credibility to the concept of revolution.

The second show I witnessed did not go as smoothly as the first one. This time the participant turned out to be a young architect who came to Berlin from West Germany to study and work in a prestigious company. His name was Andreas. Although reluctant, he decided to take part in the show. During the lengthy interview part he kept on expressing doubts and concerns about the need for a revolution and stated on numerous occasions that people should focus on individual hard work and 'tending one's own garden'. But it still came as a surprise when just before the crucial moment of introducing him on stage Andreas changed his mind, turned his back, and went straight home leaving the members of the group empty-handed. The performance fell into crisis, so the group started to look for another protagonist, and eventually found somewhat anticlimactic replacements: two Erasmus exchange students who did not speak either German or Eng-

lish. Once they realized the tragic situation, the actors rushed towards the final scene to wrap up this embarrassing show. The overall outcome of the performance was strikingly different from that of the previous one. Andreas's reluctance and Erasmus students' communication problems complicated Gob Squad's stance: revolution became a dubious concept and the group's enthusiasm seemed untimely and immature. When class and communication obstacles had been revealed, the performance about revolutionary spirit turned out – this time – to ridicule the idea of revolution.[4] Both unwanted and unexpected encounters added new layers of sense to Gob Squad's work: opening to the unpredictable environment allowed them to introduce topics of social unintelligibility, communication barriers, and class-related hostility. But these outcomes did not 'impair' the performance. On the contrary, they added complexity to the initial naivety of the group members who share similar social and intellectual backgrounds. Indeed, the folk have spoken (with many voices).

Participate! But Why?

After this lengthy description I want to return to the central issue of this text, the topic of uncertainty in theatre practice. At this point one may argue that contrasting Sophocles' drama with a contemporary postdramatic show seems like comparing apples to oranges. In a way it is true, but my aims here are not comparative, but rather abstract. I am not comparing an ancient play and a postmodern performance. I want to talk about two kinds of theatrical (and dramaturgical) uncertainty. By taking *Revolution Now!* as an example, I argue that the decision to leave the enclosed theatre space can be interpreted as a different kind of *peripeteia*, or "dramatic collision":[5] a structural overturn which opens many possible futures, introduces uncertainty into the structure of the performance, and uses it for creative and meaningful purposes. Such uncertainty is distributed among performers, viewers, and random participants who are taken by surprise in the middle of their mundane tasks. This – in turn – secures the democratic charac-

[4] In his review Brandon Woolf describes a different ending. In a performance he saw, Gob Squad stumbled upon a young designer, Itamar, who was about to open a new boutique in Berlin. When asked if he is willing to design for the upcoming revolution, he replied that he would like people to "buy his clothes and wear them to the revolution". It would be truly difficult to imagine a more ironic conclusion to the show (Woolf 2011: 148).

[5] According to Hegel, "dramatic collision" of ethical attitudes which leads to crisis lies at the very heart of every tragedy and every theory of tragedy (cf. Lehmann 2006: 35). My intention here is to hijack the term and point towards the 'accidental' and indeterminate aspect of dramatic 'collision'.

ter of the performance and establishes a different kind of epistemology of performance: 1) lack of knowledge about the final outcome is shared by all participants, who – in this regard – are not divided into entertainers (those who know) and 'entertainees' (those who will be informed later); 2) the very meaning of the show depends on the identity of the random participant and thus is established 'by accident'. I would even like to argue that the sole purpose of this 'participatory technique' is to provoke such accident. The way Gob Squad frames its search for the leader of the revolution leaves no doubts about their intents. They do not look for the real voice on the streets in Berlin, or for an authentic experience which will 'transmute' art into life. On the contrary, the whole encounter is displayed on the screen (so one can doubt if it is, in fact, taking place live) and framed with humour, distance, and irony, so that the 'real' is immediately 'aestheticized' and staged. Yet still, the impact of the encounter on the overall structure of the performance is 'real', that is, unpredictable and – as the case of Andreas explicitly evidences – potentially catastrophic. The way Gob Squad (ab)uses participation – not for authentic contact or engaging the crowd, but for 'harnessing' uncertainty – is quite exceptional and worth further discussion. Naturally, one could maintain that it only demonstrates their postmodern cynicism. However, in my opinion, this 'ironic' strategy not only allows the collective to accommodate randomness within theatrical representation, but also to bypass the shortcomings of 'authentic' participation which Claire Bishop convincingly exposed in her wide-ranging historical study *Artificial Hells* (2012).

According to Bishop, different trends of participatory art share common quality of involving many people to "constitute the central artistic medium and material, in the manner of theatre and performance" (2012: 1-2). Ideas or reasons for participation can be numerous – from simple entertainment to social engagement – but they all stem from the assumption that art should overcome the divide between passive consumers (viewers, readers, etc.) and active artists. Very often avant-garde artists in the 20th century designed participatory performances to confront the bourgeois audiences and awaken them from their elitist stupor. From the perspective of the avant-garde, which waged war against the commodification of culture, audience activity itself was perceived as valuable. However, this strategy directed against the middle class became dubious at least since 1990s when avant-garde participation found itself in the context of wide-spread technologies of interactivity, or in other words has been hijacked by mechanized (programmed) forms of participation brought upon Western culture by so-called new media (and software). This techno-cultural turn shed a different light on the issue and showed limitations of participation made only for the sake of participation. New forms of mechanized inter-action re-

vealed the ambiguity of participatory art, because what exactly do we mean by 'taking part' in theatre performance? Does standing up and walking around freely counts as participation? Do we have to say or sing something? Enter the stage and break the wall that divides performers and viewers? Or are these customary acts not participatory enough? In other words, can we reduce participation to any form of activity and is it possible to abstract the minimal amount of spectator activity which counts as participatory?

I have posed these questions to suggest that participation and spectator activity are impossible to define rigorously, so additional notions must be introduced into the equation. And for the same reason – from a more practical perspective – participation often becomes an empty gesture, a mere ornament on the (closed) dramaturgical structure of a theatrical performance. This is why it did not emerge as an important counter-tendency to theatre commodification, a trend diagnosed by Richard Schechner in early 1970s. In an important text entitled *Audience Participation* that bridged his theoretical and practical interests, Schechner conceived of participation as a repressed force in Western theatre where performers are expected only to produce commodities: "'finished' and 'packed' like other products of American culture" (1971a: 73). Schechner argued that participation was not a novelty forced onto Western culture by the avant-garde, on the contrary: it was killed off in the course of Modernity. Bourgeoisie in the Western world embraced theatre as one of its preferred art forms, but this inclusion came at a price, namely on condition that after a long day at work the viewer would not have to engage productively anymore. However, participation re-introduced into Western theatre by experimental and neo-avant-garde was often instrumentalized, becoming an aim in itself.

Therefore, to resuscitate the concept of theatrical participation it may be useful to approach it from the perspective of performative uncertainty. I would like to argue that if we want to employ participatory practices for creative purposes in theatre, we should use them as tools directed against the very idea of deterministic programming, that is, as mediums for sparking uncertainty. And this is exactly how participation in Gob Squad's *Revolution Now!* works. It begins with engaging a third party in the performance (a physical and communicational gesture), but its impact is not reducible to simply 'taking part'. It lies elsewhere: in devising an 'antifragile' structure of the performance that is materially and communicationally open in the sense of its ability to exchange information with the environment and react to actions and information that cannot be predicted. Uncertainty caused by the inclusion of 'alien bodies' into the 'performance system' activates a chain of unpredictable events which are captured by the performers within the framework of the show and given aesthetic signif-

icance. There is a clear performative dimension to this process. The ending of *Revolution Now!*, its final 'solution' – whether it tells a happy story of revolution, denigrates the idea, or points towards a different answer – emerges as a product of carefully prepared instructions, trained behaviours, unpredictable (unscripted) movements, transitory relations, and micro-catastrophes. Its interactivity does not rely on preprogrammed and secure 'end states' typical for forking-path narratives. The final outcome is unknown to anybody – maybe even despite the efforts of Gob Squad, who all in all probably expect to end the performance on a positive note. But what is interesting in *Revolution Now!* happens outside the realm of intentional and artistic programming, as aberrances or deviations from the scripted line of events. The aesthetic adventures emerge out of an artistic catastrophe which – for better or worse – may be experienced as unpleasant both by actors, participants, and viewers. Awkwardness and clumsiness are the price to pay for taking the risk and opening for dialogue. The narrative framework that allows the performance to signify the final catastrophe, so that it does not dissolve into gibberish, functions only as a necessary context and not as an executive program which determines how we should interpret the performance. It is important here to stress that without this framework the catastrophe would be meaningless. Uncertainty can be productive when it is properly contextualized and framed (marked as aesthetic). As Gob Squad members point out themselves: "our main dramaturgical work is to balance reality and form, developing strategies to be able to react to random events within a dramaturgy" (Gob Squad 2010: 30).

Gob Squad's 'antifragile' interweaving of scripted behaviour with inputs from random participators into a fixed representational frame distinguishes their artistic practice from experimental and participatory theatre which rejects representation in favour of direct, authentic contact with the audience. From radically provocative performances of the Futurists in Italy, through Artaud's ritualistic 'theatre of cruelty', to neo-avant-garde counterculture of the 1960s, provocation directed against the passive audience was one of the most noticeable artistic strategies connecting various kinds of experimental theatre (Jannarone 2009). And since the beginning of their career Gob Squad members have been consciously relating to and reconfiguring the traditions of counterculture and experimental theatre. For example, the main theme of *Close Enough to Kiss* (1997) was the desire for authentic contact with the crowd which was complicated and frustrated by layers of technological mediation; in *The Great Outdoors* (2001) Gob Squad attempted to connect the black box inside the theatre to the reality of the street; *Gob Squad's Kitchen* (2007) was a humorous tribute to the legacy of Andy Warhol and 1960s American culture. Even *Revolution Now!* could be interpreted as a postmodern commentary and joyful critique of counter-

cultural dreams of changing the world through art. It is worth recalling, in this context, that the topic of revolution (against conservatism, predictability, and boredom of bourgeois life, etc.) appeared in most of the iconic performances of Living Theatre, Open Theatre, and Schechner's Performance Group. In the 1960s Schechner postulated that given the inertia of Western culture devoured by passive consumerism and obsessive attachment to tradition the role of contemporary theatre – as a medium of participation – should be rebellion and transformation of modern life (1967: 27). According to Schechner, the first step in this theatrical revolution was to defile the sanctity of text; the second, to affirm volatility, randomness, and unpredictability of live performance. And Schechner's view of theatre as a medium for cultural revolution accurately described confrontational, provocative, and sometimes violent character of theatrical experiments in this turbulent period. For example, in *Paradise Now* (1968) by The Living Theatre, or *Dionysus in 69* (1969) and *Commune* (1971) by The Performance Group actors confronted and provoked the audience, which often led to unpredictable outcomes and crises in mutual communication. *The Connection* (1959), one of the earliest performances directed by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, relied on jazz-like improvisation by actors who, not infrequently, were under the influence of psychoactive substances used to inhibit their ability to control themselves and stick to the script (cf. Sell 2005: 59–131).[6] Undoubtedly, subversive and provocative practices of American experimental theatre of the 1960s were grounded in appropriation of communicational uncertainty as a potentially creative and transformative factor.

However, in most of these cases randomness and uncertainty were welcomed and celebrated as intrusions of 'the real' into the artificial situation of the theatrical performance (Schechner 1971a: 74). Gob Squad's way of work follows a different logic. Inviting random passers-by into the theatre building (*Revolution Now!*), re-staging Andy Warhol's screen-tests with live audience (*Gob Squad's Kitchen*), or encouraging viewers to join their small reality-show on stage (*What Are You Looking At?*, 1998) should not be read as gestures aimed to break the 'fourth wall', turn theatre into a social ritual, or celebrate (real) life over art. As I already noted, participation in Gob Squad's theatre practice is always employed within an aesthetic framework of fiction, narrative, or – usually – fictionalized reality. The ending of *Revolution Now!* does not function as 'an outbreak of the real', or as a true encounter with the true folk (opposed to inauthentic theatre-go-

[6] Schechner even strived to redefine theatre as an art of environment in which matters of representation and meaning are replaced by spatial categories of "environmental design", that is, "creating and using of whole space" (1971b: 379). He proposed a theory of theatre focused solely on space, movement, bodily relations, etc.

ers). All actions of the participant chosen at random at the end of the show were ultimately framed as a part of the theatrical reality which suspended the binary opposition of the real and the fictitious. Nina Tecklenburg, a theatre scholar who collaborated with the group for years, also recognizes Gob Squad's indebtedness to the tradition of American experimental theatre, but at the same time she highlights the differences between them. She claims that in the case of the group

> interaction [is] not a breakthrough of the real into a fictive situation, but a breakthrough of the real into a framed real. . . . The collective thus quotes and simultaneously undermines a dichotomy that is relevant for many avantgarde and postdramatic theatre practices: face-to-face encounter vs. the one-way communication of traditional theatre as well as early entertainment media culture. . . . To go beyond this means two things: to distance oneself not only from the classical but also from the postclassical theatre of "authentic encounter," although both theatrical forms — classical and postclassical — remain visible (2012: 19).

However, as one might infer from this description, Gob Squad's art is neither a celebration nor a mourning after the loss of the real. The real – in the form of spontaneous excitement, unwanted awkwardness, unintentional failure, and other minor 'happenings' – appears in their work in and through fiction.[7] As I already stated, their method of work consists of careful scripting and inclusion of randomness which create a peculiar 'antifragile' form that depends on unexpected deviations from the script without necessarily 'taming' them (as predicted outcomes to choose from) or blurring the line between art and life. All in all, Gob Squad members take responsibility for being artists who want to 'put on a show'; not to abolish theatre and create an illusion of authenticity. This is why Gob Squad performances are usually well-structured and filled with technological 'barriers' separating actors from viewers (screens, cameras, or masks), although all these devices are not used as "obstructions but as the basis of encounter" (Tecklenburg 2012: 19). What I find exceptional about their work and worth theoretical recognition is precisely this paradoxical antifragile form: although the group works in a big theatre institution, uses various technologies of mediation, reaches for post-Brechtian poetics of distance, and retains some sort of dramaturgical framework, it is still able to harness and play with uncertainty.

[7] It is probably this suspicious approach towards unmediated authenticity that irritated Schechner who qualified the group as one of the examples of "conservative avant-garde" which only recycles old ideas without a truly "destructive attitude" of the real experimental theatre (2010: 908).

Antifragility: From Economy to Art

The notion of antifragility is an invention of Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the 'enfant terrible' of contemporary economy. He is aggressively anti-neoliberal, anti-socialist, not really anarchist, definitely not Marxist, etc. However, despite many controversies surrounding his economic theory of antifragility, his ideas can be fruitfully applied to theatre and performance studies. But first, let's clarify what antifragility is. Taleb assumes that Western culture conceptualized different forms of organization as being either fragile (easy to damage) or robust (solid, resilient). To steer away from this unhealthy dualism, Taleb tries to find a third way in thinking about systems: titular 'antifragility' describes forms of organization that are neither fragile nor robust, but rather able to benefit from shocks and other stressors. The spirit animal of Taleb's theory is Hydra – the mythical creature which is able to grow even more heads after being beheaded (Taleb 2012: 33). To put it bluntly, antifragility is the ability to 'gain from harm', but – of course – not from any harm. By positive stressors Taleb means micro-disturbances which can affect those systems that are not too big to register them and evolve. Therefore he advocates keeping things simple and the downscaling of economic systems. He also takes a strong stance against Modernity, which he understands as a "systematic extraction of humans from their randomness-laden ecology—physical and social, even epistemological" (108). Taleb reminds us that the idea of upscaling and securing the system of power connects most modernist political and economic projects. Think – on the one hand – of centralized governments which try to exercise control over all aspects of social life or of huge monopolies and – on the other – of banks that are 'too big to fail'. What on first look seems contradictory – free market neoliberalism and socialist central planning – turns out to share the same enemy, that is, randomness and unpredictability which are countered with surveillance or various forms of planning that aim at securing the present and predicting the future. But such large-scale projects become susceptible to random shocks and unpredictable events which endanger their integrity. From here it is easy to draw an analogy between Taleb's argument and the matters discussed earlier.

As I concluded above, classical dramaturgy at the same time regulates performances and supports the deterministic worldview in which true randomness cannot exist, because the theatrical script serves to imitate the causality of nature. This is why the classical structure of a play is best fitted to present ordered worlds from which chance events are excluded. The succession of events follows the rules of causal necessity and finally forms a deterministic chain connecting protasis, epitasis, and catastrophe. Although pristine, elegant, and orderly, such structures are also very fragile

– any random event that interrupts the chain is a disturbance that cannot be harnessed productively. Let's imagine a spectator intruding on a classical play and 'making a scene'. Nothing positive can come out of such disturbance, as actors cannot adjust the dramaturgy to the unexpected event. Similar argument could also be made against modernist mise-en-scène paradigm which freed itself from linearity and causality, but at the same time reinstated a singular vision of the artist, the grand director. It is thus possible to point out that from this perspective we can see that the distinction between classical dramaturgy and modernist, more experimental forms that dominated in the 20th century (including postdramatic tradition) is not as substantial as it is commonly perceived.

However, Gob Squad "antifragile" aesthetics, which Tecklenburg situated outside the dichotomy of "classical . . . and postclassical theatre of 'authentic encounter'" (2012: 19), shows an interesting way out of the safe spaces of bourgeois theatre tradition, deterministic dramaturgy, and – interestingly – 'artificial hells' of participation. The collective reaches out to the audience or the outside world not for the sake of authenticity, but to provoke micro-disturbances which will force the actors on stage to react and adapt. This ensures that every performance is, in fact, very different, and its uniqueness does not depend only on the performers, but on unpredictable events arising from interactions between actors, viewers, and the outside world. The scope of possible outcomes is not defined only by the group (and their capabilities), but extends almost endlessly into the field of social life.

Of course, this ability to react to stressors and adapt lies not only in the formal qualities of their performances, but it is also intrinsically tied to their work method and unusual education which – again – does not fit into the binary contradistinction between amateurism and professional training in theatre academy. It is not by chance that none of the group members went to a classical theatre school: part of the group graduated from 'Creative Arts' on Nottingham Trent University, others finished the multidisciplinary (and multimedia) Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen. This implies that none of the members trained to be a professional actor, scenographer, or a director. But thanks to this fact the group was able to overcome the constraints of specialization and work as a true collective, exchanging positions, perspectives, and hierarchies (Gob Squad 2010: 10). And for this reason, upon embarking on a new project everyone in the group is uncertain about their responsibilities and roles. Moreover, most of the members were trained to work with cameras and not with their physical bodies on stage. This is why most of their work involves live recording and performing behind screens and other escapist surfaces. And this is the case in *Revolution Now!* – the piece begins with a long scene shot in

the lobby of Volksbühne and ends with a long escapade outside the theatre building. However, Gob Squad never uses these portable media to secure their 'artistic product', that is to say to make their performance more polished and reproducible in the same form. Quite the opposite, they struggle with the camera and look for ways to disrupt the false sense of security provided by technology. I would even argue that Gob Squad's openness to unpredictable stressors – structural antifragility of the performance system – can be read as a form of compensation for the use and abuse of these technologies. Arguably, there is a correlation between the excess of security in the age of electronic media and the need to disrupt their form and content. Simon Will, one of the longest-serving group members, explains that one of recurring themes in their work is the critique of cultural 'convenience', the state of overabundant security and daunting predictability achieved by Western societies thanks to technological development and the privatization of life which allows citizens to enclose themselves in safe bubbles (of matter and information) (Gob Squad 2013). This overestimation of convenience has a very practical and severe downside: Western, highly developed societies become unable to deal with social uncertainty and randomness, because these abilities can only be learned by exposure to unpredictable factors (so-called otherness).

Just like Taleb's notion of antifragile economy was directed against the fetishization of safety and predictability, Gob Squad's antifragile dependence on uncertainty is a response to the lack of randomness in 'the culture of convenience' (and not to the 'loss of the real' bemoaned by counterculture in the 1960s). In *Liquid Times* Bauman wrote that economic and technological acceleration, which causes an erosion of traditions, customs, and institutions and provokes existential uncertainty in people who lose their waypoints and coordinates, is being countered on an infrastructural level by new technologies and new forms of social organization. He defended his argument by giving such examples as the rise of gated communities, enhanced surveillance, security checks at airports, etc. But nothing illustrates this process better than the history of bourgeois theatre which since its early days repressed social uncertainty by policing the audience and which established the hegemony of scenic action, classical dramaturgy, and – later on – artistic vision of the director. Relying so heavily on illusion and classical dramaturgy, theatre lost its social function as a place of confronting social otherness. From this perspective, I hope it becomes clear where the significance of Gob Squad's work lies. Their 'antifragile theatre' running on the fuel of 'performative uncertainty' may be regarded as an interesting alternative to – on the one hand – deterministic and content-centred modes of artistic production, and – on the other hand – to experimental theatre which wants to dissolve in the social sphere. Furthermore, antifragile thea-

tre can be understood as an experimental space for social encounter where true otherness and uncertainty can be expressed and channelled for expressive purposes. And this is exactly why it is important to discuss the notion put forward by Taleb in the context of culture and artistic practice.

To sum up my considerations, I would like to make one final remark about the risks of fetishizing the notion of antifragility and the whole concept of opening to unexpected stressors, which can easily become an aim in itself. Again, we can learn a lot in this regard from Gob Squad. Firstly, I must stress again that the whole concept of antifragility does not consist in getting rid of any fixed forms of organizing performance, but rather in carefully 'devising' semi-fixed structures which benefit from the unknown and the unpredictable. To achieve this, artists must think of their scripts in terms of open systems consisting of non-definitive commands, rather than linear sets of text to present despite all obstacles. Secondly, this method is highly dependent on the organization of the group. It is impossible for a director (or any other individual and centralized instance) to devise antifragile performances. For example, unexpected inputs may require minor *ad hoc* (emergent) redirecting of the performance by group members. Fragility of the classical theatre – in most cases – stems from relying on one responsible decision maker who cannot react to new stimuli quickly enough. And lastly, there is of course a limit to productive uncertainty. Too much noise and unpredictability may cause the system to collapse: the inclusion of too many voices into the performance can turn it into gibberish, and the disturbance caused by the environment may be so strong that the system will not regain stability. And there is also another limit to uncertainty, one which contradicts Taleb's economic fetishization of unexpected stressors: collective and experimental work that does not follow any specific goal and remains open to artistic unpredictability requires basic economic security. And for that very reason I remain highly sceptical about the notion of economic antifragility, but also strongly believe in and argue for creating antifragile platforms for artistic practice which will help express uncertainty and randomness as creative forces indispensable for social life.

Finally, if we agree with Schechner's long-term prediction that 'fragile' theatrical forms – belonging to the aesthetical order of the *mise-en-scène* – will be slowly superseded by more 'spectacular' technologies of representation (1997: 5), then Gob Squad's aesthetics of antifragility seem to offer a unique type of experience which despite its representational format cannot be emulated in cinema or in front of the computer (at least now). Although the collective constantly makes use of new media technology, it also strives for errors and imperfection: their performances are always unfinished, spontaneous, reactive, and fragmentary. Additionally, while maintaining critical distance towards mainstream capitalist entertainment, Gob Squad's

theatre is still simply engaging and fun. The suspense founded in the case of classical dramaturgy on lack of knowledge here takes the form of excitement, because the future of the performance is not known to anybody. As Tecklenburg accurately concludes: "in Gob Squad's affirmative guerrilla theatre, critical distance and reflection need not exclude entertainment and pop, and alienation and melancholy can also stand beside spectacle, empathy, and enthusiastic engagement" (2012: 30).

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Michael Coveney*

Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Patrice Chéreau*, London: Bloomsbury (The Arden Shakespeare), 2018, pp. 272

Abstract

London theatre critic Michael Coveney reviews *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Patrice Chereau* by Dominique Goy-Blanquet, tracing the career of a great director to its roots in a love for the Elizabethan theatre of Shakespeare and Marlowe, noting how a famous production of Richard II proved so influential that Shakespeare replaced Moliere as France's most performed playwright. The author vividly evokes a modern chain of European theatre stemming from Brecht through two of Chereau's most significant post-war mentors, Roger Planchon at the TNP, Villeurbanne, and Giorgio Strehler at the Piccolo in Milan. Chereau, who died in 2013, was a director of remarkable taste and intellect, his productions of Marivaux redefining that playwright and his imagination creating a lunar landscape for the new plays of Jean-Marie Koltes, Jon Fosse and others and frequently a Shakespearean dimension, too. The book is a compendium of fascinating production detail and a compellingly argued history of a crucial period of European theatre in which Chereau played a leading role.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Elizabethan theatre; Patrice Chereau

The director Patrice Chéreau, golden boy of French theatre and, to a lesser extent, cinema, who died aged 68 in 2013, was internationally renowned for his stagings of Marivaux, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Wagner's *Ring* at Bayreuth, but his career, at a glance, seems eclectic and inconsistent.

It is the intriguing achievement of Dominique Goy-Blanquet's book that the various strands are interwoven into a clearly connected tapestry with Shakespeare its predominant motif. And the influences and project choices are discussed in the context of post-war European theatre, especially in Italy and France itself, and his impact throughout the artistic world. Chéreau emerges, in this account, as not only a great artist in his own right – which we knew – but a key historical link, maybe the strongest, in the chain of the European theatre forged by Brecht and Meyerhold through Roger Planchon and Giorgio Strehler through Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine to Peter Stein and Ivo van Hove.

The Flemish director van Hove studied Chéreau's work intensely and closely, just as Chéreau had gone to Berlin to study the work of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. Each of these great directors – and van Hove is already acquiring an international reputation that may even outstrip, if he doesn't spread himself too thin, Chéreau's, who never did – works with a highly developed cinematic sensibility,

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not in the way of the gratuitous use of live video and documentary material, but in the 'atmosphere' of the stage, the intensity and naturalism of their actors, and their avid deconstruction of power games and sweeping changes in societal upheavals. And they shared a deeply informed enthusiasm for the films of Visconti, Bergman, Orson Welles and Elia Kazan.

Concentrated elements of eroticism and violence are common to both directors, as well as what I'd glibly label an aesthetic grandeur, architectural vision and rarefied good 'taste'. Chéreau absorbed the Brechtian theatre but reacted against it, never embracing the virtually incomprehensible notion of "alienation". The blood and guts of his theatre would always embrace the audience without creating the sort of critical, objective distance Brecht advocated and which still informs the beautifully restrained work of Peter Brook.

Goy-Blanquet having identified the well-springs of Chéreau's inspiration in the Elizabethan theatre, it is easy for us to deduce a continuity between, for instance, his revival of Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* at Planchon's Théâtre National Populaire in Villeurbanne, near Lyons, in 1972, and his sumptuous movie version of Alexandre Dumas's political bodice-ripper *La Reine Margot* (1994) in which the impossibly beautiful Isabelle Adjani as Marguerite de Valois is a butterfly broken on the wheel of an arranged marriage, intrigue and violence in the Shakespearean battle between Catholics and Huguenots for the succession.

And both pieces have the St Bartholomew Day massacres at their black hearts. The account here of that Marlowe revival is staggering: Chéreau and his regular designer Richard Peduzzi created a city of tall houses on a vast laguna, evocative of a Piranesi tower, the surrealist paintings of Paul Delvaux and de Chirico, with assassins flitting around in Magritte bowler hats and Elizabethan doublets, the chiaroscuro lighting – designed, crucially, throughout the rehearsals and not, as is usually the case, at the end of them – revealing double-faced alliances on both sides before the orgy of blood-letting.

The spectacle was hugely controversial, Chéreau denounced as "a spoilt brat of the bourgeois state" and a traitor to the spirt of Jean Vilar, who had founded the Avignon Festival in 1947 and transformed the TNP in 1951; Chéreau, who told an interviewer at the time that he yearned for an allegorical theatre where ideas would at long last ignite emotion by dint of beauty, would triumph in both Vilar arenas in the coming years. He had already instigated a sea change in French theatre with his 1970 revival of Shakespeare's Richard II, the first in French since Vilar's at the first Avignon Festival.

He saw *Richard II* as a political tragedy of Renaissance humanism and, although he remained unconvinced by Jan Kott's political arguments in the already highly influential *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964), he did recognise in *Richard II* the old feudal class retreating before the rise of a new power, that of money, with the monarchy acting as banker. *Richard* opened in Marseilles and moved to the Odéon, Paris – nominated the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in 1985 when Giorgio Strehler, who had encouraged Chéreau, was appointed by Jack Lang as the head of a new European theatre project – and was promptly denounced by Chéreau's own translator, the venerable Pierre Leyris, who abominated everything done by Planchon and his protégé; but, again, the impact was

considerable.

This was the first major exposure of the Chéreau style with the production team he had established while running an avowedly populist theatre in the commune of Sartrouville, seventeen kilometres to the north west of Paris: Peduzzi's signature tall structures were lit by André Diot, with sound by André Serré and costumes by Jacques Schmidt. The courtyard of a feudal palace was covered with seventeen tons of sand among the huge pillars of a castle jail, and the action pursued in a world of wooden machinery, drawbridges and winches marking the ups and downs and transfer of power. Chéreau himself played the title role (after a leading actor defected) and Gérard Desarthe, his future Peer Gynt and Hamlet, was Bolingbroke.

Within a decade of this performance, notes Goy-Blanquet, Shakespeare had replaced Molière, of all people, as the most performed playwright in France. The outlandish element of a soundtrack quoting Maria Callas, Pink Floyd and Janis Joplin belied Chéreau's attentiveness to the text. Over the subsequent years his forensic study of Shakespeare would justify his creation of a parallel play to the author's where he felt necessary, with cuts and minor re-writes in translation, but always with respect for Shakespeare's artistic genius.

It's an interesting assertion of Goy-Blanquet that Chéreau found contemporary theatre writing, on the whole, too restrictive for his ambition, for what he called when a young schoolboy, finding his love of theatre and cinema, his war machine against melancholy. His father, a friend of Roger Planchon's, was the well-known painter Jean-Baptiste Chéreau, his mother a textile designer and his maternal great grandmother, Lise Tréhot, a model for Renoir in many of his best loved early paintings.

At the prestigious Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, young Patrice ran the school's theatre group and linked up with several future colleagues and lifelong friends: the costume designer Schmidt; Jean-Pierre Vincent, who would run the Comédie-Française; and Jérôme Deschamps, the future manager of the Opéra-comique. He was always reading voraciously, studied German literature for two years at the Sorbonne and took over the Sartrouville theatre aged just twenty-two. The idea of theatre as a public service, endemic to the TNP, which he'd discovered at the end of the 1950s, was enhanced by an invitation to visit the Piccolo Theatre of Strehler and Paolo Grassi in Milan, where he learned Italian, directed plays of Pablo Neruda, Tankred Dorst, Marivaux and Wedekind, and, in 1969, his first opera, Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* for the Spoleto Festival.

And then Planchon invited him to join him as his co-director at Villeurbanne. The TNP visited London four years later, in 1976, the first foreign company to play at the new National Theatre on the South Bank. The productions were Planchon's magnificent version of Molière's *Tartuffe*, whose pastel-coloured, trompe-l'oeuil set splintered apart at the moment of revelation; and Chéreau's revolutionary edition of Marivaux's *La Dispute*, which was unlike any production I'd ever seen in London to that date, even during the famed World Theatre seasons at the Aldwych in the 1960s: stripping away centuries of powdered wigs and 'marivaudage', Chéreau presented an eerily Shakespearean forest, lit by moonlight in a jungle bursting mistily through Peduzzi's high barricades, where four adolescents,

raised from childhood by black servants, discovered their sexuality, and bestiality, in a supervised Sadean experiment.

In that same year, Chéreau's *Ring* at Bayreuth, conducted by Pierre Boulez, invented a new high (and 'low' for some vociferous critics) standard of opera production, bathing the epic on a crepuscular blue light – the DVD recording is a particularly good souvenir of the event – creating a hydraulic dam on the Rhine, replacing mythological flim-flam with metropolitan endeavour and finding a Shakespearean dimension to the destructive paternalism of Wotan – and a radically definitive Brunnhilde in Gwyneth Jones. The original Chéreau *La Dispute* was in 1973, and before he re-worked it for later tours, the director responded to Edward Bond's *Lear* with typical bravado. As in all her 'Shakespearean' reports, Goy-Blanquet's critical exegesis is detailed and illuminating, noting the ways in which the director does not at all share Bond's nihilistic pessimism. Although she doesn't spell this out, it's clear that Goy-Blanquet believes that the changes and arguments the director makes and has with the playwright – Shakespeare or Bond – are rooted in a close examination of the play's meaning, not in careerist vanity of any kind.

At the same time, Chéreau himself knew that the French theatre of his day was a director's theatre, the British primarily a writer's. His last TNP show was *Peer Gynt* in which Desarthe played the hero from youth to old age, prefiguring Hamlet in registering his endless struggle against the monster within himself, the fear that inhabits us all.

The production propelled him into his appointment as managing director of the Théâtre des Amandiers ("almond trees") in Nanterre, the suburban town west of Paris where, in 1968, the students' revolt began, led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit. *Les événements* and the Algerian war of independence ending just six years earlier are the two main historical landmarks in the French cultural history of the 1960s, and both informed the work of many French theatre practitioners, not just Chéreau, whose temperament was exactly attuned to the zeitgeist while resistant to its more vulgar expressions.

Over his eight-year stint in Nanterre, he supervised, in effect, a national theatre of dissent, with a production of Jean Genet's Algerian war play, *The Screens*, transposed to a contemporary setting of French immigrants; the plays of his great discovery – you might say, invention – Bernard-Marie Koltès, and of Heiner Müller and Hervé Guibert; and the visits of such other vaunted maestri as Robert Wilson, Peter Stein, Luca Ronconi, Pierre Boulez and Luc Bondy. There were workshops and student productions, a self-contained facility of cafés and studios, galleries, all of it fuelled by his own restless activity and mercurial interventions.

On my first visit there in 1985 I saw Chéreau's revival of an early Marivaux play, *La Fausse Suivante*, and found Jane Birkin as a countess responding with palpably erotic ardour to a disguised chevalier (Laurence Bourdil, who was one of the young girls in *La Dispute*), allegedly spying on her assigned fiancé elsewhere in the household. There was nothing coy or artificial about their encounter; the exact opposite, in fact, and I've felt ever since that this is how the Viola/Cesario and Orsino scenes should be played in *Twelfth Night*. It was electrifying, and played out again in one of Peduzzi's monumental, grey, eerily dead-of-night set-

tings with sickly lighting, a perpetual dawn chorus of farmyard noises and actors clothed in sweeping capes, tricorn hats and high boots on a large curved ramp supporting a single classical doorway.

Around this time there was a trend across Europe of appropriating old warehouses, markets and tramsheds for performance – Peter Brook had reanimated the old Bouffes du Nord as early as 1974, and struck out with two startlingly austere and unrhetorical productions of *Timon of Athens* and, a few years later, *Measure for Measure.* In Britain, following the Roundhouse in London, we had the Royal Exchange in Manchester and the Tramway in Glasgow, but no production I saw there, not even Brook's *Mahabharata* in the Tramway, sucked up the atmosphere of the old building to the extent that Chéreau's Nanterre production of Koltès's *Dans la solitude des champs de coton* did when it visited the old 19th century covered market of Les Halles, in Brussels, in 1987.

The former life of the renovated building – it had also been a car park – seeped into this philosophical tango for two players, The Dealer, a black bluesman, and The Client, a psychotic punk, with a resonating vengeance. The action was played in a traverse staging with the audience banked up on either side, somewhere in the shadowy environs of cranes, commerce and warehouses. But what was being traded? Drugs, sex, the meaning of life? The tense encircling of the actors reminded us of the boxing ring in Brecht's early thriller in the asphalt jungle, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, and the ornate, deliberate prose had a distinct echo of Diderot's dialogues, particularly that between Diderot and Rameau's nephew in the gardens of the Palais-Royal. And there was something of Beckett's tramps, too, frozen in time and purpose. But again, there was a Shakespearean dimension to this matadorish contest, the approach and the resistance, in notions of friendship, treachery, love.

The production was part of a four-pronged assault from Nanterre at the Avignon Festival of 1988: the others were the long overdue *Hamlet* – for which Goy-Blanquet was commissioned to write a translation of John Dover Wilson's *What Happens in Hamlet?*, a lodestar for Chéreau's thoughts on the play – Luc Bondy's revival of *The Winter's Tale* and "Scenes from Chekhov". In the background of all French Hamlets to date had been, says Goy-Blanquet, Paul Valéry's vision of the impending death of civilisation after the First World War: "From an immense terrace of Elsinore which extends from Basel to Cologne, and touches the sands of Nieuport, the marshes of the Somme, the chalk of Champagne, and the granite of Alsace, the Hamlet of Europe now looks upon millions of ghosts" (qtd in Goy-Blanquet 2018: 103). Not in Chéreau's *Hamlet.* Having absorbed all these echoes, the play's history and context, the director discards everything and starts, says Goy-Blanquet, "from the raw text, the bare set, nude flesh, bodies level with the ground among raised pillars or aggressive machinery" (p. 104). Just as for Peter Stein, his motto is, "What is not understood by the actors will not be performed" (p. 106).

Similarly, if Chéreau had a good reason not to direct a piece he wouldn't. Verdi's *Othello*, for example, he deemed not worth doing because, in his view, it was so far inferior to Shakespeare's play. And a film about Napoleon's last love on Saint-Helena, slated to star Al Pacino and Juliette Binoche, was abandoned af-

ter seven years' work for lack of adequate funding. One of his most extraordinary achievements, as documented by Goy-Blanquet, was to inject Racine's *Phèdre*, at the Odéon Ateliers Berthier in 2003, with Shakespearean intensity, thus brfeaching the usual gap in French theatre between body and mind, analogous to the gap between public and private theatre, low brow and highbrow. Chéreau did this by refusing to observe the end-stopped lines of the alexandrine, running them on to flow with the sense, not the metre; making Theseus and his son, Hippolyte, object of his mother's inflamed passion, look very similar; and by bringing catastrophe and death onto the stage, flouting the rules of classical decorum in the cause of theatrical truth.

Chéreau remains best known internationally for two films: *La Reine Margot* and *Intimacy* (2001) based on two stories of British author Hanif Kureishi, whose screenplay for *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985) had much impressed him when he saw it with Bernard-Marie Koltès. In *Intimacy*, Mark Rylance as a bar manager who has left his wife and family had explicit on-screen sex, once a week, and without any verbal communication, on dingy neutral territory in south London, with Kerry Fox as a married, small-time fringe theatre actress. Rylance's barman, inevitably, becomes obsessed with Fox's actress, breaks the rules of the deal, and follows her into her private life, thus courting disaster and precipitating an ambiguous tragic ending.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the movie, and a side-issue, was the account given of it, and the reactions it prompted, by Fox's real-life partner (now husband), the Scottish journalist Alexander Linklater. As quoted by Goy-Blanquet, his article, published in both Prospect magazine and the Guardian, reveals that Linklater had already experienced and dealt with the role of playing a sexual outsider: as a teenager playing William in As You Like It, he inadvertently came upon the much older girl playing Audrey, on whom he'd developed an uncontrollable crush, having sex in a car with the boy playing Touchstone.

Linklater honestly recounts the bumpy emotional ride he endured watching the film, at once sublime and deeply upsetting. But he came through on the other side. He and Kerry have two boys. Rylance has remained schtum on the film, declining an invitation from the Young Vic to play *Macbeth* directed by Chéreau for his first production on a British stage since *La Dispute*. Instead, in May 2011, Chéreau directed Jon Fosse's *I Am the Wind*, done into English by Simon Stephens, at the Young Vic. Two men – are they brothers, lovers, companions? – go on a journey. A simple raft heaves out of the floor on a lift. The men set sail. They eat a little, drink schnapps and head for the open sea. They are not waiting for Godot, they are looking for him, perhaps… the excitement mounts.

This very short play was strange, beguiling, hypnotic and irritating all at once. But the painterly production, at once epic and small-scale, showed the genius of Chéreau and designer Peduzzi at its most poetic and seductive, and my mind dissolved in images of the forest in the moonlight in the Marivaux play all those years previously. Not only that. Chéreau had cast two outstanding young British actors – Tom Brooke and Jack Laskey – as the castaways on their journey of discovery to the heart of the best European theatre of our day. I felt proud. Let's hope Brexit, if and when it happens, does not pollute that memory.

Gherardo Ugolini*

When Heroism is Female. Heracles at Syracuse

Abstract

Among the plays staged at the 54th Festival of Greek Theatre at Syracuse (14 may-8 july 2018) the event that attracted the greatest attention was Emma Dante's production of the *Heracles* of Euripides. The Sicilian director proposed an innovative and subjective revisiting of the play without upsetting the sense of the Greek original. The staging makes use of an alternation of registers and styles, from the pathetic to the grotesque, from the tragic to the humorous, besides diversifying musical and choreographic modes. The aim is that of showing up the extreme fragility of the protagonist, compelled to regress from the glory of his heroic achievements to a destiny of suffering. In order to focus on this fragility Emma Dante assigns all the male roles (Lycus, Heracles, Amphitryon, Theseus and the Messenger) to female actors, thus provocatively reversing the codes of ancient Greek theatre.

Keywords: Euripides; Thebes; Syracuse; Greek tragedy; Emma Dante

Emma Dante's staging of Euripides' *Heracles*[1] was definitely the production that most successfully captured the audience's and the critics' attention at the 54th Festival of Greek Theatre at Syracuse, which was held at the Greek theatre of Syracuse from the 10 May to the 8 July 2018. Traditionally the Syracusan performances of the INDA (National Institute of Ancient Drama) tend to maintain a fair amount of fidelity to the original text and a reassuring conventionality in the staging. But it is sometimes the case that the keys to the production are entrusted to directors who have made experimentalism and innovation the bywords of their reputation and who therefore take up the option of a complete renewal both of the theatrical conventions and of the fundamental implications of the ancient plays that they put on the stage. Born in Palermo, Emma Dante, actor, playwright and director both of plays and films, has returned to Greek tragedy 15 years after her staging of *Medea* (2003) with Iaia Forte and Tommaso Ragno, to confront the text of *Heracles* without the least fear or reverence and has transformed Euripides'

[1] *Heracles* by Euripides, director Emma Dante, Italian translation Giorgio Ieranò, costumes Vanessa Sannino, scenes Carmine Maringola, music Serena Ganci, choreography Manuela Lo Sicco, lighting Christian Zucaro, cast: Mariagiulia Colace (Heracles), Serena Barone (Amphitryon), Naike Anna Silipo (Megara), Patricia Zanco (Lycus), Carlotta Viscovo (Theseus), Francesca Laviosa (Eris), Arianna Pozzoli (Lyssa and one of Heracles' children), Katia Mirabella (Messenger), Samuel Salamone (Coryphaeus), Sena Lippi and Isabella Sciortino (Heracles' children), students of the Accademia d'arte del dramma antico della Fondazione Inda (Chorus). First performance: Syracuse, Greek Theatre, May 10 2018. The production was repeated at the Teatro Grande at Pompeii (19 and 23 July 2018) and at the Roman Theatre in Verona (14 and 15 September 2018).

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late fifth century BC play in a totally innovative and subjective re-interpretation, which, however, does not disrupt the sense of the Greek original.[2]

The choice of the three plays for the 2018 edition – *Heracles* by Euripides, *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles[3] and *The Knights* by Aristophanes[4] – in the minds of the organizers of the Syracusan Festival, was intended to generate a clearly political meaning. As the Festival's artistic director Roberto Andò wrote, in a note published in the theatre programme entitled "The Scene of Power":

> The titles of the two tragedies and of the comedy trace . . . the protean visage of the hero and the tyrant in the ancient world and describe the tragic escalation, the psychic derailment and the possible degeneration into farce. (Andò 2018: 7)[5]

The philologist Luciano Canfora, in his definition of the 'concept' behind the Festival's programme, identifies the scarlet thread linking the three plays as the "metaphor of power" which

> is the metaphor of life itself, it is the moral fable that obliges us to reflect upon the fragility of human destiny, upon its enigmatic and often irrational mutability. This is the essence of the tangle of existential paradoxes – positive and negative – confronting each and every hero in Greek tragedy. The biographies of the tyrants of Greek history are coloured by the crucial features of the biographies of the heroes of myth: a childhood on the margins of society, predestination, occasionally marked by some physical and/or moral deformity, an important marriage and social rise, heroic deeds of conquest and the founding of cities, fall from power and remarkable death – in short, disproportion and disharmony, which result in the impulse towards contradiction and excess. For better or for worse. In this way hero and antihero become two sides of the same coin, two faces of the same person: it is thus that in Greek tragedy the tyrant becomes a Titanic figure in his greatness, but his prestige and power rebound, above all, against him, far beyond his own intent. In the end he is

[2] Other plays directed by Emma Dante and inspired by Ancient Greek mythology are *Alcesti* (2007), *Verso Mede*a (2014), *Odissea A/R*, (2015) and *Io, Nessuno e Polifemo* (2015).

[3] Director Yannis Kokkos, Italian translation Federico Condello, scenes Yannis Kokkos, music Alexandros Markeas, costumes Paola Mariani, lighting Giuseppe Di Iorio, cast: Massimo De Francovich (Oedipus), Roberta Caronia (Antigone), Eleonora De Luca (Ismene), Sebastiano Lo Monaco (Theseus), Stefano Santospago (Creon), Fabrizio Falco (Polyneices), Danilo Nigrelli (Messenger), Sergio Mancinelli (Foreigner), Davide Sbrogiò (Coryphaeus), students of the Accademia d'arte del dramma antico della Fondazione Inda (Chorus). First performance: Syracuse, Greek Theatre, May 11 2018. The production was repeated at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus (17 and 18 August 2018).

[4] Director Giampiero Solari, Italian translation Olimpia Imperio, scenes Angelo Linzalata, costumes Daniela Cernigliaro, music Roy Paci, cast: Francesco Pannofino (Sausage-Seller), Gigio Alberti (Paphlagonian/Cleon), Roy Paci (Coryphaeus), Antonio Catania (Demos), students of the Accademia d'arte del dramma antico della Fondazione Inda (Chorus). First performance: Syracuse, Greek Theatre, 29 June 2018.

[5] "I titoli delle due tragedie e della commedia tratteggiano . . . il volto proteiforme dell'eroe e del tiranno nel mondo antico, descrivendone l'escalation tragica, il deragliamento psichico e la possibile degenerazione farsesca".

driven to solitude and crime and in this way becomes his own victim (Canfora 2018: 10-11).[6]

In point of fact, contrary to the keynote declarations of the Festival's promoters, in the case of Euripides' *Heracles* Emma Dante's directorial choices end up by draining the political values of the play of almost any significance. The figure of Lycus, the terrifying tyrant, is reduced, more or less, to that of a neurotic caricature and as far as that of Heracles is concerned, the motif of the fall of the hero and of his psychological and material destruction is merely hinted at, and even then in a grotesque fashion. So no musing on power and tyranny, then, the themes which permeate almost the whole of Attic tragedy. If anything, there is the prevailing sense of an 'existential' perspective: of how divine providence can have allowed an invincible hero, capable of killing terrifying monsters, to commit atrocious crimes against his own family, so that he would inevitably face a future of grief and suffering and become the emblem of the precariousness of human glory.

The most striking feature of the staging is that of giving the parts of all the male characters of the play (Lycus, Heracles, Amphitryon, Theseus, the Messenger) to female actors (who are significantly 'masculinized' in their gestures, intonation and the volume of their voices). Only the chorus of old men (Fig. 1) and the coryphaeus (Samuel Salamone) are left to male interpreters. With this provocative choice, Emma Dante intends to overturn the dominant codes of ancient theatre where it was usual to entrust the parts to male actors. So Serena Barone takes the part of old Amphitryon, Heracles' father, Mariangela Colace is Heracles, just back from Hades in his shining armour, whose manner of walking is convulsive and spasmodic, and whose gestures, unremittingly exaggerated, and Carlotta Viscovo is Theseus. The part of Megara, Heracles' wife, is interpreted by Naike Anna Silipo. In a preliminary scene, 'invented' by the director as a sort of informative prologue, all the characters, including the minor parts, enter one at a time, accompanied by tumultuous drum-rolls, and introduce themselves to the public, telling them who they are. During the course of this bizarre parade, voices, movements and costumes straight away coincide in exhibiting the exuberance and grotesque dimension that will characterize the whole play. The figure of Amphitryon, Heracles' aged father, is the one immediately to catch the spectator's attention. In this production he gains a centrality absent in the ancient text, seated, as he is, in a wheelchair, and speaking in a strong Sicilian accent and with a shrill voice. If the local accent is meant to excite empathy in the audience, his accentuated physical fragility (some-

[6] "Perché la metafora del potere è metafora della vita stessa, è apologo morale che ci obbliga a riflettere sulla precarietà della sorte umana, sulla sua mutevolezza imperscrutabile e spesso irragionevole. Intorno a questa riflessione si aggrovigliano i nodi esistenziali degli eroi – positivi e negativi – della tragedia greca. Le biografie dei tiranni della storia greca si colorano dei tratti topici delle biografie degli eroi del mito: infanzia marginale e predestinazione, segnalate talora da una qualche deformità, fisica e/o morale, matrimonio importante e ascesa sociale, gesta di conquista e attività di fondazione, tracollo del potere e morte eccezionale – in definitiva, squilibrio e disarmonia, che si estrinsecano in un impulso alla contraddizione e all'eccesso. Nel bene e nel male. Ed è così che eroe e antieroe diventano facce della stessa medaglia e della stessa persona, ed è così che nella tragedia greca il tiranno diviene figura titanica nella sua grandezza, il cui prestigio e potere si ritorcono anche, anzi soprattutto, contro se stesso: persino al di là della sua stessa volontà. Il tiranno è infatti costretto alla solitudine e al crimine, e diviene perciò vittima di se stesso".

times he gets out of the wheelchair and walks with difficulty, leaning on crutches) makes him an emblem of human precariousness, susceptible to fear and pietas, and an uncompromising opponent of Lycus' tyrannical prevarication.

Fig. 1: The Chorus. Photo Franca Centaro/AFI Siracusa.

The aspect of the play that strikes the spectator right from the beginning is undoubtedly the originality of Concetta Maringola's scenery. On the large circular surface of the Greek theatre of Syracuse there is no particularly noticeable reference to Greek antiquity, but neither is there any to modernity. There are no palaces or large buildings in the background as could be expected. The walls around which the actors move are not those of Thebes, but rather expanses of white marble seven metres high and about twenty in length, upon which are hanging dozens of black and white photos of the dead together with skulls and votive candles. In front of the walls are placed open tombs from which wooden crosses are sticking up and going round and round like windmills. At the centre of the scene a large marble tank full of lustral water is a conspicuous place of purification: Megara and Heracles' children will immerse themselves in it after the death sentence decreed by the terrible Lycus, before the hero's return to mete out justice. The scene is obviously a stylized version of a cemetery, a place of death, suffering and ritual. The inevitable spatial allusion is to Hades, the place Heracles is about to return from after concluding his last labour (the capture of Cerberus); but there is also included a tacit reference to the massacre of his family that the protagonist, driven mad by Hera, will shortly carry out, and to the fact that Heracles will then want to commit suicide to pay for his guilt, before he is saved by Theseus' friendship and his promise of a welcome in the land of Attica. The scenic space occupied by the cemetery may thus be considered as a suggestive extension of the extrascenic space

(the Underworld) where the protagonist has just come from, and also as a symbolic forecast of the deaths about to happen.

Emma Dante's theatre is one which communicates above all through body-language: the physicality of the female actors dominates the stage with incessant rhythmical movements often ending in frenzied dancing. If the tyrant Lycus manifests his corporeality in a pompous and boastful manner to the point of appearing a caricature of megalomania which becomes almost ridiculous, Heracles is presented as excessive from all points of view (Fig. 2). His first stage entrance is emblematic: first he pauses in silence to contemplate the photos of the dead on the cemetery wall; then suddenly, at the moment when Megara and his children are about to be executed by Lycus' minions, he bounds on to the stage, exuberant and brash, accompanied by a servant laden with his baggage, acclaimed like a star by the crowd of citizens surrounding him, who are waving his picture and asking for his autograph. His jerky, irascible movements are reminiscent of a caricature of a Sicilian pupo (a scenic modality which will return at the end in the dialogue between Heracles and Theseus)[7] rather than of a state of mental agitation already present from the moment he comes onstage. The bunch of roses he offers his wife is an element underlining the farcical dimension of the whole production. Burlesque is indeed the dominant signature style of the staging, albeit with insertions of great tragic pathos, as, for example, in the scene where Megara, anguished but full of dignity, celebrates the funeral clothing ritual of her children preceded by the rite of purifying and cleansing in the tank.

Heracles is a strange play, full of sudden twists and turns, in which the whole range of passions and all the shades of theatrical meaning are in some way included: feeling and fury, horror and pathos, fable and grotesque, cynicism and sentiment, family affection and Dionysian delirium. And it is, above all, the play about madness par excellence. From Seneca onwards, playwrights and directors focused their attention on the explosion of homicidal mania which strikes and drags a hero such as Heracles, by definition a civilizer and benefactor of humanity, down into the dust.[8] The madness is caused by the monsters Lyssa (Madness) and Eris (Strife) unleashed by Hera, but perhaps it is an affliction which has been lurking in the protagonist's mind for some time, and which suddenly and resoundingly breaks out. Scholars have been discussing this for centuries, but in Euripides' play the *rhesis* of the Messenger (ll. 922-1015) patently emphasizes the 'change' undergone by Heracles (cf. l. 931: ὁ δ' οὐκέθ' αὑτὸς ἦν, "He was no longer himself") at the moment he evokes in words the symptoms of the hero's sudden madness, which the audience does not see: his distorted face, his rolling eyes swollen with bloody veins, the foam which trickled from his mouth, his manic laughter, etc. With Seneca's *Heracles furens* the protagonist's madness will be anticipated to the audience right from the prologue, in order to lend continuity and solidity to the plot; besides this, the *furor* will be represented as the inevitable consequence of an exagger-

[7] On the continual reference to the Opera dei Pupi see Giovannelli 2018.

[8] The theme of the homicidal madness of Heracles is not an invention of Euripides, but is one of the features of the legend which was mentioned elsewhere; it must have been cited in the lost epic poem *Kypria* of the fifth century BC and according to Pausanius (9.11.2) it was quoted by Stesichorus and by Panyassis while the historian Pherecydes of Athens (fr. 14) cites the names of five children thrown into the fire by their father. For the history of the reworkings, adaptations and stagings of Euripides' *Heracles* see Riley 2008 and Wyles 2015.

ated *modus vivendi*, the consequence of the hero's obsessive megalomania. Along these lines modern reworkings and theatrical productions have greatly emphasized Heracles' madness as a crucial moment of the play, with differing results.

Fig. 2: Heracles (Mariagiulia Colace). Photo Franca Centaro/AFI Siracusa.

Given these premises it was legitimate to expect an ingenious solution from Emma Dante in the case of the representation of the 'dance of madness'; but the ballet performed by the two demons Lyssa (Francesca Laviosa) and Eris (Arianna Pozzoli) is brief and lacking in intensity. The solution adopted by director Luca De Fusco in 2007 during his staging of Euripides' *Heracles* in the same theatre was much more successful. In that production the protagonist did not enter as a triumphant hero, but rather seemed a man tormented and alienated, unable to understand the sense of his destiny, tortured by an obscure malady which was devouring his soul. Lyssa, or Madness, not portrayed as a monster but as a lovely young girl attired in a silvery peplum, ensnared him and seduced him through a dance accompanied by poignant violin music which evoked his spiralling delirium.[9]

[9] The tragic madness of the *Heracles* of Euripides can be read as a form of Bacchic possession induced by the musical code. See Rocconi 1999.

The final scene, that is, the close dialogue between Theseus and Heracles with the concluding entombment rite of the bodies of Megara and the children, is rather too hurried, with the consequence of detracting from the fundamental importance that this scene has in Euripides' play, as it is the 'unravelling' of the plot with the promise of welcome in Attica and the celebration of the saving power of *philia* between heroes. The general impression is that the whole conclusion converges in giant steps towards the closing line, which Emma Dante puts into the text itself and into Theseus' mouth. Now that Heracles is at peace with himself and aware of the necessity of bearing his suffering, Theseus exclaims to him: "If anyone could see you now they would say: you are behaving like a woman!" In a way, this line, resounding with metatheatrical irony, could be said to put the finishing touch to Emma Dante's 'female' staging. It is not only a question of subverting the formal practice of ancient theatre which only allowed for male actors: this would indeed be a somewhat sterile exercise. Her aim is that of removing traditional heroism, mostly a matter of physical strength, from the male domain, and re-establishing its implications within a perspective both more human and more comprehensive, which includes victory but also defeat, solidity and fragility, joy and grief, madness and the capacity to accept, share and overcome suffering. In a word, a 'female' perspective.[10]

Emma Dante's version of *Heracles* is certainly very different from past productions of this play staged at the Greek Theatre in Syracuse and it displays the unmistakeable hallmark of its director.[11] The alternation of registers and styles, from the pathetic to the grotesque, from the tragic to the humorous, the diversification of musical and choreographic modes (from syncopated movements to the whirling of dervishes) are elements at the same time startling and fascinating. This is of course compatible with the underlying intent of Euripidean tragedy which on the linguistic plane uses unusually varied registers, from dialogues spoken in a direct tone which is sometimes even colloquial to speeches which are lyrical, visionary and solemn. Emma Dante's object, as has been pointed out, was that of presenting a fragile Heracles thus subverting the bellicose heroism which made of him the emblem of brute force. The artist has explicitly revealed the aim of her work in these words:

> I am interested in the fragility of Heracles because it is neither strength nor power that make him virile. It is his soul and his courage which render him hu-

[10] For that matter, in *Heracles* Euripides had already focussed attention on the theme of the precariousness of the human condition. The playwright's choice to reverse the chronology of the mythical saga and to postpone the hero's massacre of his family until after he had finished his labours, as different from the conventional narrative of the myth (as evidenced by Bacchylides, Pindar, Apollodorus and Diodorus Siculus) served to show how the invincible and civilizing hero, who had freed the world from terrible monsters, could guiltlessly succumb to madness. In the alternative sequence, the twelve labours represented the price to pay for the murder of his loved-ones, the expiation of a massacre already committed. On the different treatments of the myth of Heracles in the ancient world see Padilla 1998.

[11] Before 2018 there were only two productions of Euripides *Heracles* at the Greek Theatre of Syracuse: in 1964, Italian translation Salvatore Quasimodo, director Giuseppe De Martino, with Sergio Fantoni as Heracles and Arnoldo Foà as Lycus; and the above-mentioned one of 2007, Italian translation Giulio Guidorizzi, director Luca De Fusco with Ugo Pagliai as Amphitryon, Sebastiano Lo Monaco as Heracles and Massimo Reale as Lycus.

> man, certainly not his muscles. He is a solitary and neurotic invincible demigod, who at the height of the tragedy turns on his heels and exits the scene, not seeking the sacrifice of the penalty for his crimes [i.e. he does not want to undergo a sacrificial rite to expiate his crimes] but escapes from grief following the advice of his dearest friend. Heracles is human. (Dante 2018)[12]

This is an interesting approach, a legitimate one too, and from a certain point of view would also have pleased Euripides who definitely focuses on these aspects in his play. The factor which remains less convincing and, in any case, not taken to its ultimate consequence is the transformation of the hero into a woman, his feminization. In order to demonstrate the weak and unstable side of heroism is it really necessary to burden it with highly connoted female features? At the end of the performance the feeling remains that this is a clever provocation but an unresolved one. As if the director and her production remain enveloped in the paradoxes of the scenic game she has expertly created.

Translation by Susan Payne

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[12] "In Eracle mi interessa la fragilità perché non è la forza né il potere a renderlo virile. È la sua anima e il suo coraggio a fare di lui un essere umano, non certo i suoi muscoli. È un semidio invincibile solitario e nevrotico, che all'apice della tragedia gira i tacchi ed esce di scena, non cerca il sacrificio della pena per i suoi delitti, ma fugge dal dolore seguendo il consiglio dell'amico del cuore. È umano Eracle".

Angelo Righetti*

Measure for Measure
Shakespeare Festival, Roman Theatre, Verona, 19-21 July 2018

Abstract

The review discusses the assets and liabilities of the production of *Measure for Measure* directed by Paolo Valerio for the 2018 Shakespeare Festival at the Roman theatre in Verona. After giving a fair write-up of performance (acting, scene-setting and costumes), the reviewer foregrounds the central, aporetic issues of the 'dark' comedy/tragicomedy – love, sex, law and religion. Reservations are expressed about the fast tempo imposed on the tragic part of the play by privileging intrigue and allowing Duke Vincentio to dominate the stage as a puppet master – thereby overshadowing the mirroring effect of the comic one that is almost downgraded to a farce instead of working as a realistic counterbalance.

Keywords: Shakespeare; *Measure for Measure*; tragicomedy; performance; aporia; justice; mercy

Measure for Measure featured for the third time on the bill of the Shakespeare Festival held at the Roman theatre in Verona on its seventieth anniversary. It was first staged there in 1967, directed by the then avant-garde director Luca Ronconi, starring celebrities like Massimo Girotti as Duke Vincentio, Sergio Fantoni as Angelo, and Valentina Fortunato as Isabella. Exactly twenty years later, a new production followed by the well-known English director Jonathan Miller, with Giulio Brogi playing Vincentio, Aldo Reggiani in the role of Angelo, and Elisabetta Pozzi in that of Isabella. Both mises-en-scène were moderately successful in spite of the high professionalism of actors and directors.

Over fifty years after the first open air performance 'on the banks of the Adige river' – despite its many, prestigious revivals in Britain starting in the 1960s and '70s and continued into the new millennium – the premiere wasn't convincing enough – still, it deserves suspending judgment especially because of the limited time devoted to rehearsals.

For the time being the audience response must be taken into account as they followed in nearly absolute silence the intrigues "unfolding" the multi-plot, 'dark' comedy, and were so overwhelmed that they tepidly applauded the actors "strutting" in their "two hours' traffic" on the stage.

One may wonder whether the audience appreciated the effort of the director, Paolo Valerio – chairman of Fondazione Atlantide Teatro Stabile di Verona – en-

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trusted with the only production of the Shakespeare Festival for the current season ("thrift, thrift"... alas!). The joint venture, sponsored by the Town Council of Verona, involved the Fondazione Teatro della Toscana with a view to the revival of *Measure for Measure* at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence for the next winter season, with Massimo Venturiello in the play's leading role, 'on loan', as it were, for the Veronese summer theatrical event.

The performance of individual actors and the company's labours on the whole were dignified, but unfortunately the director's approach to the twofold nature of the play did not sufficiently highlight the entwining of tragedy and comedy (a tragicomedy in fact) – that sets the pace at different stages of its development. Namely, with the 'slow motion' of the former mirroring the racing rhythm of the latter, with high station characters and action confronted by everyday people and goings-on of the dregs of society in Vienna. Vienna is a tag name suggesting an exotic place like Verona or Venice to identify a city where a friar is far more of a busybody than friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet* – but meaning London, owing to clear references on the scene to Southwark with its taverns and brothels, and frequent allusions to VD and pox recently and allegedly 'imported' from the newly discovered Americas.

In his famous essay "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919) T.S. Eliot calls *Measure for Measure* "a profoundly interesting play of 'intractable' material": after Freud it is not so hard to realize that the intractability of Hamlet's problems (the character's) refers to an unsolved Oedipus complex shaping a tragedy Eliot labels as a "play dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son".

One wonders what is intractable in *Measure for Measure*. By and large I would say a pre-modern, pre-Reformation issue, that is, the still unseparated semantic and ethical spheres of sin (vice) and crime, and a still unachieved freedom of conscience. Both are combined with, and dependent on traditional patriarchal structures of power – the disguised Duke's final mandatory imposition of 'judicious' matches hardly concealed by an age-old recourse to the comedic, outworn "bed trick".

Besides, intractability deeply influences the tragic plot that veers back and forth on aporias of justice and mercy, and a debate on the law and its enforcement, preeminent in *The Merchant of Venice*, though not carrying the extremely dramatic consequences of *Measure for Measure*.

Yet another question pertaining to the tragic part of the play, although its possible disastrous results are overshadowed here, is the Duke's transfer of absolute power to Angelo, his Deputy and alter ego, whose mission is to set things right in his absence and have the law strictly observed. The move is not explained or is vaguely explained away, but foreruns King Lear's abdication, something sacrilegious for an Elizabethan audience, and here, despite the 'happy' ending the risk of a moral, social and political, disruption is ever present, however much the Duke's ruse and scheming fight it back and have the upper hand.

A group of characters impersonated by experienced actors links the tragic plot(s) and the comic subplots, in particular Escalus (Roberto Petruzzelli) and the provost (Marco Morellini) who stand for mercy on grounds of compassion and common sense, and above all Lucio (Alessandro Baldinotti), who dares a critique,

both direct and oblique, of power abuse (Angelo's), or contests and unmasks (metaphorically and literally) power in disguise (Vincentio's).

The Duke – played by Massimo Venturiello at top speed even when matters of power, law, and religion demand a slowdown to give the audience time to 'digest' and think – is the "unmoved mover" that leads to the final recognition by treating all the other characters like puppets on a string. His presence on the stage, disguised as a friar, is made pervasive by having his gigantic photograph projected on backdrop banners, making him an eavesdropper all the time – and in his own authoritative persona he ends up becoming the substitute director engaged in metatheatrical operations.

Simone Toni (Angelo) and Camilla Diana (Isabella), male and female deuteragonists, still young actors but with a significant curriculum to their credit – are only in part up to the difficulties and double binds of their respective roles. Angelo's inner debate on his decision to enforce the law by abiding to the letter that imposes a death sentence on "fornicating" Claudio and prison for his lover Juliet, is suddenly confronted with his overriding passion for Isabella who defensively clings to principle (chastity). Angelo's blackmail follows: she ought to yield to him in exchange for saving her brother's life – and Claudio (played by Francesco Grossi, one of the new voices of the Teatro della Toscana and Verona), out of the anxiety of *timor mortis* emotionally blackmails her too.

In the text the crucially dramatic situation, central to the play, is explored in tense dialogue first between Isabella and Angelo and then between Claudio and Isabella, whereas the director cuts it down to size and simplifies it to suit a speedier action – hurry seems to be his obsession – and the subtle, long-drawn-out temptation of the mind verging on the temptation of the flesh is made to end up indulging voyeuristically in the realistic physical assault of Angelo on Isabella, and in the suggestion of incest between brother and sister.

The open air resources of the Roman theatre are put to good use by adopting the minimalism of the Elizabethan stage and its scanty properties. On a bare scene all the characters move and interact, but unfortunately shout and at times almost rant, and the noise effect is deafeningly amplified by the microphone on the mouth of each actor. This is somehow inexplicable because both old stagers and young actors have sensitively pitched voices trained in prestigious schools of theatre art (Piccolo Teatro and Filodrammatici in Milan, Orazio Costa and National theatre in Florence, Teatro Stabile in Verona).

A set of moving, variously coloured banners as a backcloth have already been pointed out in connection with the Duke's projected image on them as if they were screens, but they are also meant to underscore the basic opposition of appearance and 'reality' in the play, marking characters caught in critical situations, as when Isabella cries out: "seeming, seeming!" – to counter Angelo's blackmail and "proclaim"/shame his conduct that appears divided between repression/self-repression and unbridled lust.

The colour of the characters' costumes is overall grey-black including the hooded habit of the friar/Duke. Perhaps the costume designer intends to create a Brechtian alienation effect by suggesting the fashion of the 1920s. I'm afraid that as regards Escalus, Provost, Lucio, their apparel recalls the uniform of first-class

funeral pallbearers, while Angelo wears a whitish overbuttoned coat that may suggest a monk's 'innocence' up to the blackmail scene, but is returned to a grey-black suit when he is under trial and up to the 'happy' ending.

As for the women characters: Juliet (Federica Pizzutilo) is grossly identified by her "sin" – as, being heavily pregnant, she enters the stage exhibiting her swollen breasts and baby bump, but (comically) insists on necking Claudio (in pants), "arrested and carried to prison"; Isabella, as a novice is supposed to conceal all signs of femininity and is overdressed like a Red Cross nurse on duty, while Mariana (Federica Castellini, a very good actress playing in a minor key here), resurrected from Angelo's past as a pawn in the Duke's game, appears as a nondescript back-combed blonde preparing to resume her position as Angelo's betrothed and finally his wife after profiting by the "bed trick".

To sum up, it is the opinion of the writer of these notes on the assets and liabilities of the Roman theatre performance of *Measure for Measure* that Paolo Valerio's production will greatly improve from a tauter cohesion between the different phases of the play, more rehearsals, and above all a theatre where voice modulations do not need microphones.

Mark Brown*

Waiting for Godot in the Marketplace: Setting the 2018 Edinburgh Festival in Context

Abstract

This article seeks, for those who are unfamiliar either with Edinburgh's summer festivals or, at least, with their origins and history, to set the festival programmes we have today (and, in particular, the theatre programmes of the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe) in their broader historical, economic and cultural context. It then considers (from the author's subjective standpoint) four of the best theatre productions presented in Edinburgh during the festivals of August 2018: namely, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, staged at the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) by the Druid theatre company of Ireland and directed by Garry Hynes; *La Maladie de la mort*, a new adaptation of Marguerite Duras's novella, written by Alice Birch and directed by Katie Mitchell, presented at the EIF by French company Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord; *Unsung*, a new monodrama about the public and private lives of a career politician, by the Flemish theatre collective SKaGeN and performed by Valentijn Dhaenens as part of the Fringe programme of the Summerhall venue; and, finally, *Ulster American*, a political satire written for the Traverse Theatre's Fringe programme by Scotland-based, Northern Irish playwright David Ireland.

Keywords: Curated; open-access; Edinburgh International Festival; Fringe; Song of the Goat; Beckett; Druid; Duras; Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord; SKaGeN; Summerhall; David Ireland; Traverse

The 'Edinburgh Festival', which is held every August in Scotland's capital city, is celebrated as the world's biggest platform for the arts. Although often referred to as a single festival, the August events, in fact, consist of six separate festival programmes[1] including the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (both of which were inaugurated in 1947).

Created in the spirit of optimism following the Second World War, the success of these festivals owes a great deal to their location. Known as 'The Athens of the North' on account of its splendid Gothic and Georgian architectures, Edinburgh is, in many ways, an ideal festival city. Not only does its beauty attract visitors, but, with a current population of just under half a million and a superb range

[1] Details of five of the August festivals, and other festival programmes held in Edinburgh throughout the year, can be found at: edinburghfestivalcity.com. The sixth programme in August is the Edinburgh TV Festival: thetvfestival.com (last access 15 October 2018).

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of permanent[2] and temporary[3] venues, the city has the perfect combination of size and infrastructure.

Any overview of the Edinburgh events must take into consideration the significant differences between the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (the Fringe). The EIF is a prestigious,[4] relatively well funded[5] and, crucially, curated programme.[6] By contrast, the Fringe (which, in its enormous size, largely accounts for Edinburgh's status as the pre-eminent arts festival city in the world) is an open-access festival; if one can afford the registration, venue, accommodation and other related costs, one can stage a show at the Fringe.

The scale and nature of the Fringe makes it something of a double-edged sword in artistic terms. On the one hand, the programme offers audiences an extraordinarily exciting experience of the arts which is unrivalled in its size and diversity. There can be few, if any, festival programmes in the world that provide arts lovers with a greater opportunity, not only to see the work of established artists, but also to stumble across previously undiscovered gems and excellent emerging artists.

However, on the other hand, the open-access programming of the Fringe promotes a commercial 'free-for-all'; to find the undiscovered gems, one may well have to experience a considerable amount of lacklustre art. One sign of the Fringe's position as a commercially oriented arts 'marketplace' is that, in recent times, lucrative stand-up comedy has come to occupy a significantly larger section of the Fringe brochure than theatre does. Big name Fringe producers,[7] whilst they stage some interesting work, are widely considered to be primarily commercial operations. Although few artists on the Fringe make much money (many leave Edinburgh out of pocket), the big producers tend to be the financial winners.

This said, there are Fringe venues (most notably Scotland's new writing theatre the Traverse and the Summerhall arts centre) which run curated programmes in which artistic concerns take primacy over commercial ones. One small incident, involving the acclaimed Polish theatre company Song of the Goat,[8] provides some insight into the contradictions of the Fringe, and, in particular, the tensions

[2] Including the splendid Victorian playhouses of the Festival Theatre and the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Scotland's new writing theatre the Traverse and the converted church building of Assembly Roxy.

[3] Ranging from lecture halls at the University of Edinburgh to community halls and, even, public toilets; for example, Irish theatre company Semper Fi staged their fine and memorable play *Ladies and Gents* in the public lavatories in St James Place during the 2003 Edinburgh Fringe.

[4] The importance of the Festival to the British state is reflected in the fact that it has been under Royal patronage since its inception in 1947. Queen Elizabeth II was patron between 1952 and 2017, at which point her son, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, became Royal patron.

[5] The Festival receives financial support from The City of Edinburgh Council, Creative Scotland (the quasi-non-governmental organisation [or "quango"] tasked with dispensing public money to the arts), the Scottish Government and a number of corporate and individual sponsors and supporters.

[6] The Festival is curated by its director Fergus Linehan, whose first programme was in 2015.

[7] Such as Assembly, Underbelly, Pleasance and Gilded Balloon.

[8] Or Teatr Pieśń Kozła, to give them their Polish name.

between commercial and artistic motivations within the planet's single largest arts programme.

Song of the Goat's devised, highly physical, visual, vocal and musical work stands in the tradition of the great Polish theatre master Jerzy Grotowski (indeed, "the Goats", as they are sometimes known, are based in the western Polish city of Wrocław, which was home to Grotowski's famous Laboratory Theatre). As such, their work was a perfect fit for the programme of Aurora Nova, a curated programme of international, largely European, visual theatre, dance and performance, led by German performer-turned-producer Wolfgang Hoffmann, which played in St Stephen's Church during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe from 2001 until 2007;[9] a period in which, in my opinion, it staged the strongest curated theatre programme to be seen on the Edinburgh Fringe in the last three decades.[10]

The Goats' relationship with the Fringe is a conflicted one. The company presented *Chronicles – A Lamentation* (2004) and *Lacrimosa* (2007) at Aurora Nova, to considerable critical and audience acclaim. However, despite this success, the artists felt that the commercialist and consumerist atmosphere of the Fringe was at odds with the reflective, spiritual tone of their work. In 2007, during the run of *Lacrimosa*, the company's artistic director, Grzegorz Bral, told me that Song of the Goat had decided not to play the Fringe in future. The demise of Aurora Nova as a Fringe venue in the same year seemed to make the Goats' absence from the Fringe programme more certain. However, following the establishment of the Summerhall venue in 2011 and the appointment of its founding artistic director Rupert Thomson,[11] Bral and his company were attracted back to the Fringe, playing *Songs of Lear* as part of the Summerhall Fringe programme in 2012 and *Return to the Voice* (a co-production with Summerhall, presented in St Giles Cathedral) during the Fringe of 2014.

The tension between the commercialist atmosphere of the Fringe and the work of Song of the Goat had been clear from the very outset. My review of *Chronicles – A Lamentation* for the *Sunday Herald*[12] in 2004 reflected on precisely this friction:

> The artistic overload of the Edinburgh Festival can itself become a party to our commercial culture's promotion of shallow gratification. *Chronicles* stands resolutely against that impulse. In its exquisite use of light and flame, and its achingly elegiac use of the human body, it appears like an ever-shifting Caravaggio painting. As near to perfect theatre as I have seen in a very long time, it is food for the soul.[13]

[9] Aurora Nova has continued to bring work to the Edinburgh Fringe since 2007 in its capacity as a production company.

[10] In its seven years at St Stephen's the programme showcased work by such acclaimed companies as Akhe (Russia), Derevo (Russia) and Farm in the Cave (Czech Republic).

[11] Appointed senior programmer for dance and performance for the Southbank Centre in London in 2015.

[12] The Scottish national newspaper which published its final edition on September 2, 2018. Its successor, *The Herald on Sunday*, began publication on September 9, 2018.

[13] *Sunday Herald*, 15 August 2004, quoted on website of Song of the Goat: piesnkozla.pl/en/archives (last access 15 October 2018).

It is in the context of the above-outlined differences and tensions, both between the EIF and the Fringe, and within the Fringe itself, that I invite the reader to consider the following reflections on four significant theatre productions staged in Edinburgh as part of the festival programmes in August 2018. As noted above, the EIF enjoys considerable esteem, both nationally and internationally. Its programmes are able to attract some of the biggest names in world theatre, from Ariane Mnouchkine and her famed French company Théâtre du Soleil,[14] to Romanian auteur director Silviu Purcărete[15] and the great German theatremaker Peter Stein.[16] The 2018 programme was no different, with work by the exceptional Irish theatre company Druid and leading French company Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (including Katie Mitchell's staging of a new adaptation of Marguerite Duras's novella *La Maladie de la mort*).

Druid's offering, director Garry Hynes's inspired production of Beckett's iconic, existential classic *Waiting for Godot*, was, for my money, the absolute highlight of the 2018 EIF theatre programme. Hynes's staging of Beckett's most famous drama is impressively and movingly attuned to a play that is simultaneously cerebral-yet-playful, and bleak-yet-life-affirming. As I noted in a review written during Festival, the Druid *Godot* succeeds in being "as deep as a treatise by Kierkegaard and as light as an evening at the music hall".[17]

It does so, in large part, by playing directly to Beckett's quintessentially modernist sense of the theatrical. The scenography itself (designed by Francis O'Connor) speaks volubly of its own theatricality. Vladimir and Estragon do their interminable waiting in a hyper-real, almost post-apocalyptic wasteland of dried, cracked earth. However, this barren landscape is illuminated boldly and brilliantly within a phosphorescent frame. The framing device is simple-yet-ingenious. Were Brecht alive to see it, one suspects he would consider it a great alienation effect.

Although the play is, in many ways, a French one (having been written originally in French, as *En attendant Godot*, some twelve years into Beckett's exile in Paris), it is also very much an Irish drama. This fact is emphasised beautifully by Irish actors Marty Rea (Vladimir) and Aaron Monaghan (Estragon). Their touchingly humane, comic and intelligent evocation of their characters' co-dependency is expressed with charming physicality and a delicious enunciation that reminds us that the Irish have long taken revenge on the British by very often writing and speaking the English language better than the British themselves.

Rea and Monaghan's clever, vaudevillian double act is matched by Rory Nolan as the brutish, yet ill-fated, despot Pozzo and Garrett Lombard as his agonisingly oppressed (and repressed) slave Lucky. Nolan plays the tyrant with a grotesquely and humorously inflated sense of his own importance, all the better to express the pathos of his blindness in Act Two. Lombard speaks Lucky's monologue with the tremendous sense of rhythm, meaning and poignancy that is demanded by, sure-

[14] Who presented their show *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)* at the Festival in 2012.

[15] Who was last at the EIF with his acclaimed staging of Goethe's *Faust* in 2009.

[16] Stein's work at the EIF includes the world premiere of Scottish playwright David Harrower's 2005 play *Blackbird*.

[17] *Sunday Herald*, 12 August 2018: scottishstage.wordpress.com/2018/08/19/reviews-edinburgh-festival-2018-august-12/ (Accessed 15 October 2018).

ly, one of the great, humanistic speeches in world theatre. Hynes is widely recognised as a leading director on the contemporary stage. This extremely intelligent and deeply sensitive *Godot* can only enhance her reputation.

If Hynes's staging of Beckett was the standout theatre production of the 2018 EIF programme, Katie Mitchell's staging of *La Maladie de la mort* (which marked her debut at the Festival) was also highly accomplished and profoundly memorable. The production works with a script by writer Alice Birch which honours the spirit of Duras's book, whilst, in some significant ways, liberally altering its perspective.

The novella (which, famously, Duras wrote whilst in the grip of her ferocious alcoholism) tells the story of a man who, believing himself never to have experienced love, asks a woman, who is not a prostitute, if he can pay her to stay with him at a seaside hotel. During the sexual relationship that ensues, the woman comes to the conclusion that the man can never experience love, as he is suffering from "the malady of death".

In Birch's version the young woman appears to be a prostitute who has taken to sex work in order to raise her young child. Mitchell's staging, which combines powerfully a variety of media, brings an extraordinary intensity to the story.

On the left of the stage sits a narrator (Irène Jacob) in a soundproof booth. In certain moments throughout the play she provides radio drama-style narration. Meanwhile, on Alex Eales's extraordinary set (which is part radio studio, part film set, part accurate representation of a hotel room), actors Laetitia Dosch (The Woman) and Nick Fletcher (The Man) give performances that are painfully resigned (her) and alienated (him). As Dosch and Fletcher play out the agonisingly strained, sometimes sickeningly abusive relations between the characters (relations which are seemingly shaped by The Man's addiction to violent, hardcore pornography), a team of three camera operators work, with deliberate obtrusiveness, around them. The consequent live film, which is projected onto a screen above the set, is cut with pre-recorded movie material depicting events beyond the room and from the past. The music (by Paul Clark) and sound (by Donato Wharton) are understated, sinisterly premonitory and in perfect harmony with the general tone of the production.

Mitchell combines these elements with prodigious skill. Every artistic form plays into and through the others. Everything is at the service of the compelling and deadening atmosphere and of the intense, discomfiting performances. Rarely does a stage adaptation of a prose fiction carry this kind of emotional and psychological charge. This production is truly as brilliant as it is disconcerting.

If the stagings of Beckett and Duras were the highlights of the EIF theatre programme, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that two of the strongest Fringe theatre productions emerged from the curated programmes at Summerhall and the Traverse. Valentijn Dhaenens (one of the quartet of theatre artists who make up Antwerp-based company SKaGeN) is well known to Edinburgh Fringe audiences. The writer and performer had hits with his solo shows *BigMouth* and *SmallWar* (which played as part of the Traverse Fringe programmes in 2012 and 2014 respectively). His 2018 Fringe offering, *Unsung*, a monodrama about the rise and fall of a career politician, was presented at Summerhall.

In the play Dhaenens takes on the role of a sharp-suited, image conscious politician (who might be based on Tony Blair in the early days of New Labour or Emmanuel Macron during his rapid rise to power). We witness the man's public speeches, his private political machinations and his uncomfortable private life (the woman to whom we see him talk affectionately via webcam while he is on the campaign trail turns out not to be his wife, but his illicit lover).

The interweaving of these elements is achieved beautifully. The staging is simple, but very effective, and assisted smartly by SKaGeN's typically sharp use of video technology. The speeches, if not actually by Blair and Macron, certainly could be. Their platitudinousness, hollow optimism and lack of substance are depressingly familiar, as is the perfectly observed, well-groomed persona in which Dhaenens delivers them.

The contrast between the politician's public bonhomie and his private political ruthlessness is wonderfully stark; he stabs his long-term "friend", and now political rival, "Fatso" in the back, and would clearly, as the saying goes, "sell his grandmother" to become his party's candidate for the premiership. However, it is in the man's personal meltdown (his marriage seems to have succumbed to the demands of his political career years ago) that the piece takes on real moral depth.

Dhaenens is absolutely captivating in his portrayal of a man in the grip of what the English writer Alan Sillitoe might have called "the loneliness of the long distance politician". Living in hotel rooms, cut off from the lives of his children and his mistress, not to say the regular lives of working and middle-class people themselves, the character becomes a resonatingly complex figure, simultaneously a perpetrator and a victim of the decadent political system that is western democracy in the twenty-first century.

Finally, politics are also to the fore in, arguably, the finest new play to be presented in Edinburgh during August 2018. *Ulster American*, written for the Traverse Theatre by actor and playwright David Ireland,[18] is an excoriating satire of both the London theatre business and the Hollywood movie industry in the "#MeToo" moment. The supposed liberalism of these totems of western culture are exposed to hilarious and purposeful challenge from the dramatist's Northern Irish perspective.

The play is set in the plush London apartment (cleverly envisioned by designer Becky Minto) of West End theatre director Leigh Carver (played with fabulously buttock-clenching liberalism by Robert Jack). There the director is meeting with, first, big name Hollywood actor Jay Conway (an unforgettably gargantuan performance by Darrell D'Silva) and, arriving late, Northern Irish playwright Ruth Davenport (played with exceptional, comic rage and, indeed, violence by Lucianne McEvoy). Between Conway's arrival and Davenport's the playwright sets up gorgeously a comedy of ineffectual English liberalism (Carver), fake political correctness and historical illiteracy (Conway), and well-earned fury (Davenport). Not on-

[18] Ireland, who is originally from Belfast in Northern Ireland, trained as an actor at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) in Glasgow. He received critical acclaim for his 2016 play *Cyprus Avenue*. He continues to work as an actor on stage and screen; in 2014 he gave a particularly notable performance as the titular, psychopathic Ulster Loyalist paramilitary in DC Jackson's play *Kill Johnny Glendenning*. He lives in Glasgow.

ly does Conway (who self-identifies as a Catholic Irish-American keen to strike a blow for Irish Republicanism) misunderstand Davenport's drama completely, but he also makes an extremely funny mockery of his professed feminism.

Davenport's religious and political heritage (Protestant and right-of-centre) and her feminine self-respect clash brilliantly with the distinct, and erroneous, political assumptions of the two men. What ensues is, as I observed reviewing the play early in its premiere run, like "a collaboration between a Northern Irish Dario Fo and Quentin Tarantino".[19] This unquestionable Fringe success for the Traverse owes as much to the universally excellent performances and director Gareth Nicholls's fine grasp of the play as to Ireland's outstanding script itself.

Even in the mere quartet of theatre productions selected above we find a fascinating cross-section of the theatrical fare provided in Edinburgh during its famous summer festival seasons. An Irish rendering of a Beckett classic; a French adaptation of Duras; a new, Flemish political monodrama; and a premiere of a blazing, Northern Irish satire: this is Edinburgh festival theatre in its great diversity and internationalism.

Fig. 1. Song of the Goat perform *Lacrimosa*. Photo: Song of the Goat.

[19] *Sunday Herald*, 12 August 2018: scottishstage.wordpress.com/2018/08/19/reviews-edinburgh-festival-2018-august-12/ (Accessed 4 December 2018).

Fig. 2.Marty Rea (Vladimir), left, and Aaron Monaghan (Estragon) in *Waiting For Godot.* Photo: Matthew Thompson.

Fig. 3. *La Maladie de la mort.* Photo: Stephen Cummiskey.

Fig. 4. Robert Jack, Darrell D'Silva and Lucianne McEvoy
in *Ulster American.* Photo: Sid Scott.

Fig. 5. Valentijn Dhaenens in *Unsung*. Photo: Danny Willem.
Photo: Sid Scott attachment management.

Books Received

Bianca Del Villano, *Using the Devil with Courtesy: Shakespeare and the Language of (Im)Politeness*, Bern – Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2018. Pp. 196. ISBN 9783034323154 € 67,95 (hb).

Andrew Filmer and Juliet Rufford (Eds), *Performing Architectures. Projects, Practices, Pedagogies,* London – New York etc.: Methuen / drama, 2018. Pp. vi, 235. ISBN 9781474247986. £ 52,50 (hb).

Stanley E. Gontarski, *Revisioning Beckett. Samuel Beckett's Decadent Turn*, New York – London etc.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Pp. xvi, 297. ISBN 9781501337628. £ 16,79 (hb).

Roberta Mullini, *Parlare per non farsi sentire. L'a parte nei drammi di Shakespeare*, Roma: Bulzoni, 2018. Pp. 145. ISBN 9788868971144 (pb).

Alan Nadel, *The Theatre of August Wilson*, London – New York etc.: Methuen / drama, 2018. Pp. 224. ISBN 9781472528322. $ 71,40 (hb).

Guido Paduano, *Follia e letteratura. Storia di un'affinità elettiva – Dal teatro di Dioniso al Novecento*, Roma: Carocci, 2018. Pp. 269. ISBN 9788843093526. € 25,00 (pb).

Robert Shaughnessy, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: The National Theatre, 1963-1975: Olivier and Hall*, London – New York etc.: Bloomsbury (The Arden Shakespeare), 2018. Pp. 245. ISBN 9781474241045. £ 52,50 (pb).

Ayanna Thompson, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Peter Sellars*, London – New York etc.: Bloomsbury (The Arden Shakespeare), 2018. Pp. 208. ISBN 9781350021761. $ 71,40 (hb).

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